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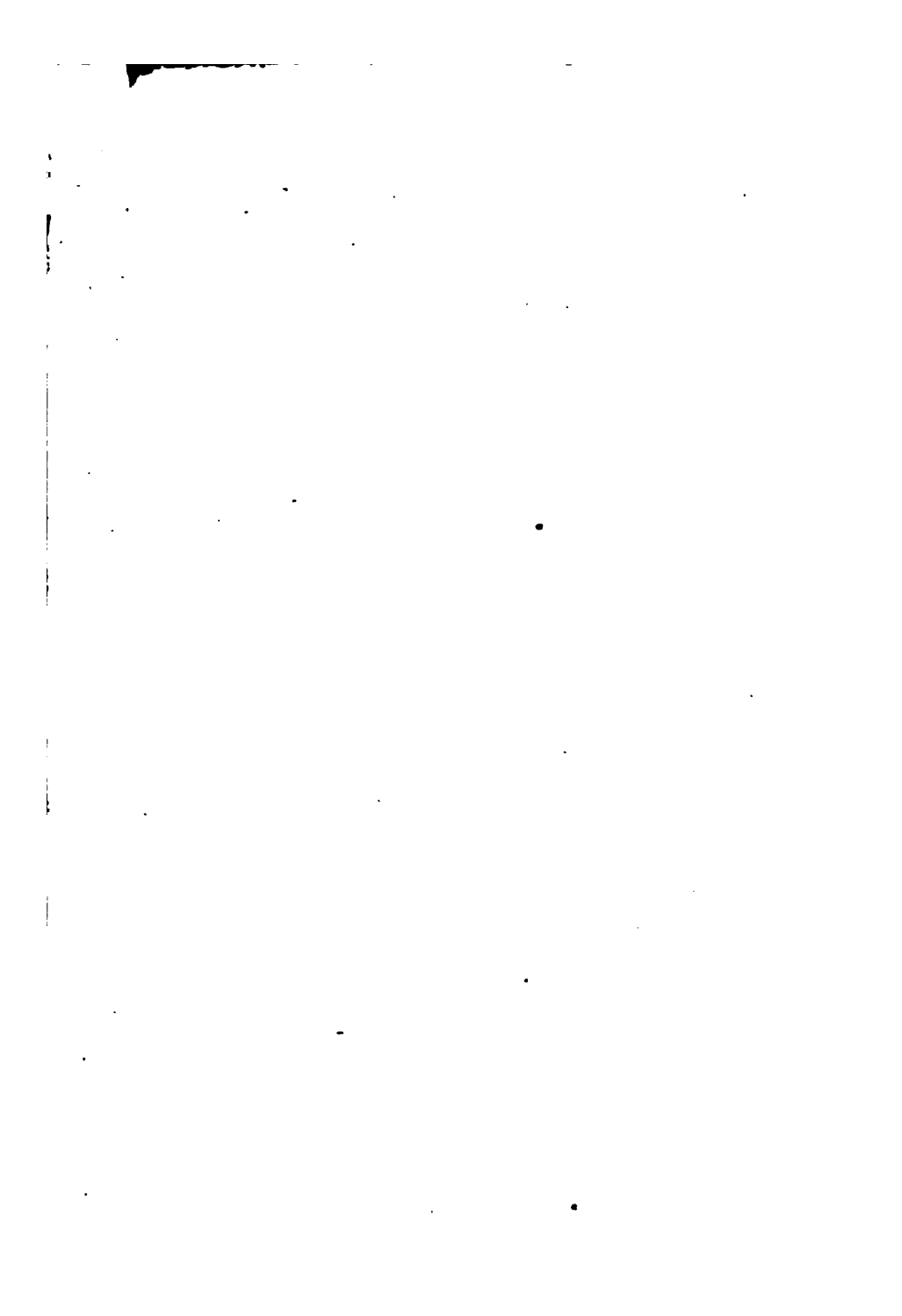
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THE
MARRIED
BACHELOR

H. SANBORN
LANYON.





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THE MARRIED BACHELOR

POPULAR FICTION

GEO. R. SIMS.

TWO LONDON FAIRIES

BARONESS ORCZY.

A SON OF THE PEOPLE
BY THE GODS BELOVED
THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL

Mrs CHAN TOON.

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE
A MARRIAGE IN BURMAH

J. HARRIS BURLAND.

THE FINANCIER

A. L. HARRIS.

THE SIN OF SALOME

Mrs E. BAGOT HARTE.

THE PRICE OF SILENCE

REGINALD TURNER.

UNCLE PEACEABLE
DOROTHY RAEBURN
THE COMEDY OF PROGRESS

ELLIOTT O'DONNELL.

JENNIE BARLOW, ADVENTURESS
THE UNKNOWN DEPTHS
FOR SATAN'S SAKE

J. HENRY HARRIS.

A ROMANCE IN RADIUM

MAX BARING.

A PROPHET OF WALES.
THE CANON'S BUTTERFLY
A DOCTOR IN CORDUROY

THE MARRIED BACHELOR . . .

A Farcical Romance

BY

H. SANT MARTIN LANYON

AUTHOR OF "SARAH, P.G."



LONDON

GREENING & CO., LTD.

1906



Dedication

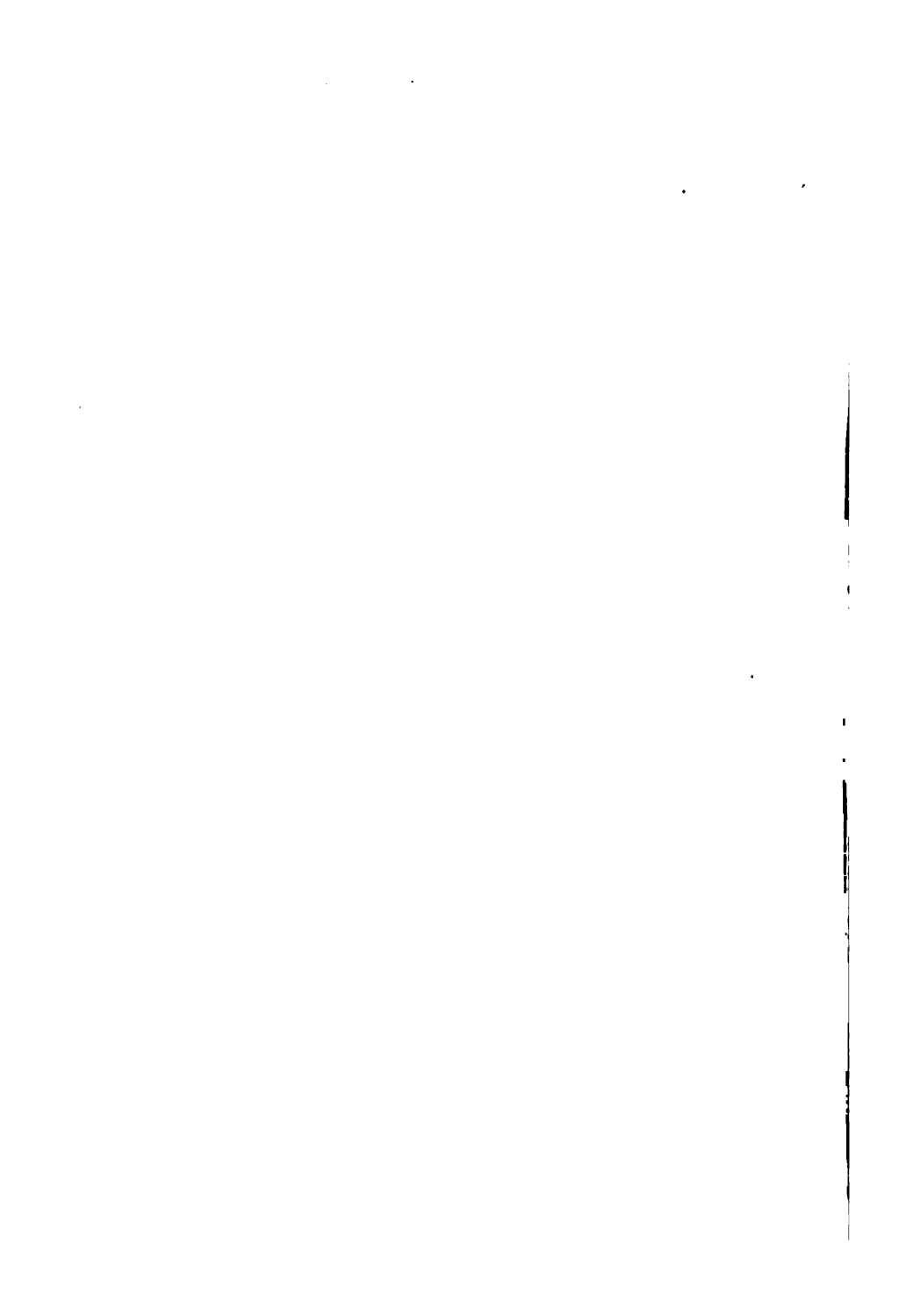
BY ALL THE GODS OF PEN AND INK !

THIS I INSCRIBE TO

COUNT J. O. TREVANLY

OF "CHÂTEAU ROSE," DINAN,

ILLE-ET-VILAINE, BRETAGNE.



Man and wife
Yoked for life,
Make it sunny weather ;

Smile and weep,
Wake and sleep,
Keep the step together.

Go or stand
Hand in hand
Being once united ;

'Tis in vain
To complain,
Love is ill requited.

Strive to bear
Either's care,
What availeth cavil ?

Share the load
On the road
You are bound to travel.

Never broach
Keen reproach,
Patiently endure it ;

Should the ill
Foil your skill,
Time perchance may cure it.

Wronged, forgive ;
Righted, strive
Which shall prove the kindest ;

Faults will rise,
Shut your eyes,
Seem to be the blindest.

Did you think,
On wedlock's brink,
You unwisely tarried ?

Blame not fate,
'Tis too late
Now you both are married.

(SIRIUS.)

“ Ein vollkommener Widerspruch bleibt gleich geheimnissvoll für Kluge wie für Thoren.”

“ A flat contradiction is ever equally mysterious to wise folk as to fools.”—GOETHE.

PREFATORY NOTE

TO "J. O. T."

THERE have been innumerable romances written about "emancipated new-women," and "girl-bachelors" (principally by men), and everlasting "bachelor-heroes," by women novelists. There have been heroes and heroines chosen from nearly every species of present-day mad humanity—young, middle-aged and old. But there is one familiar character met everywhere to-day who has been left out in the cold, singularly, unportrayed by the novelist. Honoré de Balzac, it is true, in one of his delightful short stories, gives us a hero of this type, and he, with his wonderful ability—that of the true author, in the power he possessed of conveying immeasurable suggestion in a mere word, concentrating all the music of the soul into one brief note—most aptly describes this character of his as "*the married bachelor*"; and such an one is the principal character of this story.

It claims to be nothing more than a somewhat whimsical, farcical, record of an original house-party, and another problematic study of the marriage question. It aims at portraying some modern personalities. Their movements, talk, ideas, must not be laid at the door of the innocent author; and no one must look for any sort of moral, remembering

that a sketch of a present-day house-party cannot reasonably be expected to be a moral lesson for the young. Indeed there are no lessons attempted. No plot either has been hatched, because it has to do with flesh and blood. Intricate plots, spun-out morals, can never be true reflections of Life: they are the nightmares of a novelist's too active brain, and belong only to creatures of fancy, and are not for the student of "Truth and Realism." It is said that the great commanding event, the sole revolution in a woman's life, is marriage. There have been many discussions on what are called the limits of English fiction. To the impartial onlooker, wishing very properly to vindicate the sacredness of the family, it seems that the twentieth century tendency is to be regretted. At the same time, judging from the vast number of novels that practically end completely with matrimony, it appears that there is a good field existing for novelists who begin with it and depict their chief characters during married life, in which are developed new unsuspected phases of character and temperament which could not possibly be anticipated before. Surely here, and in like direction, lie new and interesting strata of incidents,—perhaps the germs of a new type of novel which may be useful and helpful.

You will notice that the principal thing about this novel is the title!—paradoxical, apparently impossible, utterly incomprehensible, nevertheless true. See my good old Indian terms (plagiarisms, of course) from some of your dear Indian books you sent me to read from Dinan, and meaning nothing more im-

PREFACE

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proper than hermit, æsthetic, student, the lonely-anchorite, and, may I add, describing you most admirably.

It was suggested to me quite casually one day when I was reading a volume of collected short stories by Balzac, which you can get from Mudie's yourself, and see that this name is not an invention of my mind, for one of the most charming characters he describes as "*this married bachelor*." He was a man who lived also "a student's life," entirely apart from his wife, to whom, by the way, he was devoted, shut up in his den, deserting the blessed state of matrimony as it is understood nowadays, developing into a bookworm and a mystic. I was immensely impressed with his description, and thought it would also describe you, and at the same time make an excellent suggestive title for a novel.

If you ever read it, you will find it is on the marriage problem again, and its final solution is worked out after many difficult but conclusive experiments. By your own wish, it is written without any regard to conventional habits of thought or rules, and in spite of the knowledge that fashionable people in these days devote themselves to no other problems than card problems, living and thinking "Bridge," until that has now passed into a West End cure. However, you have often said that "it is the business of the present-day novelist to represent life as he sees it." Now, we all see life through our own spectacles and no one else's. That "he should represent emotions and feelings in their infinite permutations"; so if his Art should lose itself, in consequence, in the nebulous

and bizarre, it is the result of impressions received of this multifarious modern wicked human life; he is not responsible for theories, statements, or morals contained in his or her work, by whomsoever expressed. Is this not better than the good old style of weaving ærial tissues of intangible but impossible fairy delights, or else gruesome portrayals of hellish torture and torments, in which the bloodthirsty villains, or the P.V. (this means the "Polished Villain"—abbreviation from your own notebook before the day came when you awoke to find yourself famous) gives the heroine the choice of the dagger or the bowl, and she is saved at last by falling into the arms of her hero in the last chapter?

Dear friend, believe me, my only hope, however imperfectly written, is first to interest you, and then to relieve, perhaps, the *ennui* of country houses, and possibly provide gossip and scandal for London tea-parties. But in all that is realistic you will find, perhaps, interest for human nature is ever the same, and Love the same as in the days of Sappho and Horace. Probably it will be the same, too, in distant centuries, when new women are old again, and fabulous when we are, as some journals say, enlivened by romances from Sirius, brought to us every day by flying machines, and there are twopenny tubes from London to Jupiter. These papers (wise or unwise) claim only to be impressions of this mad little gay world and its inhabitants as I see them through my spectacles, the world in which one hardly dares to let one's heart beat; but I trust they may be to you fertile in suggestion, and new in conception. In

these days of more writing than reading, more newspapers than news, you will, of course, with your usual candour say, "Why add to it?" But I pray you read the proofs for me, secure in your belief you have nothing more to learn of woman in order to quite satisfy yourself that I have this time left nothing contrary to public morals. Show yourself an "editor and an author" of discretion. Improve it, perhaps, to the usual hackneyed description loved by the young and those who cherish "correct ideas," for I rebel against nearly everything conventional. "Some is born Rooshans, and some is born Prooshians, and them as is born different thinks different." So it is allowable for people to have their own ideas if they are descended from John of Gaunt or born in a gipsy's tent, or under a haystack, with merely a beanstalk for a family tree.

Were I a more erudite classical scholar, like you, for instance—oh! how I tremble to think of the passages you will have to suppress! Ah! but this is getting too much, I know, for your editorial soul. Enough! Believe me, that in spite of the title, it is altogether a novel, an up-to-date bachelor-club-girl may safely leave in the hands of her mother.

I have not your style, and lackadaisical air, which would do justice to that distinguished brick-layer Ben Jonson, in his best amatory efforts, when giving a detailed description of the physical attractions of a poet's mistress; but I still hope it will arouse the dormant senses to a more respectable attention than, say, "Bridge"—even in your own social circle, where are many political and literary lights and

Dukes are two a penny. Pray do not bestow upon me the violence usually reserved for your political opponents, or even your publishers, whom you afterwards fortunately conciliate with your wit and your wonderful novels. Well, please notice again, to be quite clear, "Bramachari" and "Van-a-pres-tan" are the Indian names given for "the married hermit," all types of men inclined to mysticism and the "æsthetic." "Samniyasi" is another Indian term, meaning the "lonely anchorite." I suppose the latter might be taken to mean a "real bachelor," or, perhaps, "a new man" ("Novus Homo"), or one who has never submitted himself to the cast-iron bonds of wedlock.

Ah! Do not criticise too harshly. There is an old saying, "The saint can stand alone, but the sinner will fall if he is not loved." By the way, why should we always have saints for our heroes, when sinners are so much more interesting and natural? The most delightful of all love-stories is *Romeo and Juliet*; but sometimes the up-to-date intrigues of dwellers in Mayfair, described in halting prose, is found nowadays more entrancing to the subscribers of the circulating libraries than, for instance, the tragic epithalamium of the lovers of Verona.—Yours truly,

* * * * *

REPLY FROM COUNT JOHN ORR THE TREVANLY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—One of Dickens' characters was a female disciplinarian who used to insist that a young woman should have no opinion whatever. This would be a diluting, a moral enfeebling, milk-and-water way of being proper. Virtues

that are purely negative, which exist because the individuals have been kept out of the way of temptation, do not amount to much. The man or woman who is good because of not having physical life or mental energy sufficient to realise a hearty impulse to be naughty, is of minor account. Our universe was not created in such a fashion. God never pasted mud and dough together when he set about to make continents. He employed volcanic seething with deep-thundering earth-fire, and so welded everything. — (ALEXANDER WILDER, M.A., in *Metaphysical Magazine*.)

Is not this a suitable reply to your letter? I have read every word of the MS. sent me. Study again Fontaine, the Father of Modern Realism. The books you sent me to read from England showed as feeble a naturalism as represented in some German novels, except the delightful short story of Balzac's. I liked the word-sketch from which you took the title, *The Married Bachelor*—the bookworm separated from his wife by his studies and books. Avoid, if you can, the forced objectivity of a Realist with his fondness for digging into moral and physical mud and dust-heaps, and also the nervous inclination of a Romanticist who would like to be looked upon as a Naturalist. Of course, it is difficult to explain to you by letter the boundary line between Realism and Naturalism, and to give you any good advice or suggestions by writing is difficult. It is by keeping a close connection with the real world and writing of people you have met. The essence of style is Individuality. The way of Art is just as great as Knowledge and Religion. Whether we try to embody in bronze, or stone, or sounds, or words, or pigments, to manifest perfection, we must strive to paint our pictures as we see them, through our own

personalities and lives. To succeed, even as an impressionist, one must be something of a philosopher. Believe me, the wise novelist writes about people with whom he is, or has been, in actual contact. Everything in my gardens is now in its perfection. I will write again to-morrow.—Yours truly,

* * * * *

Author of

"" "" "" and "" etc.

THE MONTH OF ROSES, 1905.

DINAN,
ILLE-ET-VILAINE,
BRETAGNE,
NORTH OF FRANCE.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

- THE COUNTESS EULALIA OF FESTETICS.** A "would-be" leader of the "Cause of Woman," a persona in harmony with the spirit of the day. A "Christian Scientist," a "Divine Scientist," a "Spiritualist," a "Practical Psychologist"; a strange personality whose judgment was subordinated to her too great enthusiasm for many fashionable manias and foibles of the day.
- LADY MARY AMBROSE** . An amiable, broad-minded, somewhat unconventional hostess.
- SIR EDWARD AMBROSE** . Her husband, a quiet, deep-thinking English gentleman.
- ANDREA MALLEY** . An experimentalist in thought-reading, telepathy, etc.
- LUCIUS MACNAMARY** . A most unhappily married Englishman (leading the life of a bachelor).
- MRS MACNAMARY** . An ambitious, somewhat coarse, American woman.
- VALERIE TRELAWNEY** . A beautiful young married woman, vain, careless, and exceedingly indolent. A typical butterfly whose faults and vices are always condoned by society, that is, while she stays under the matrimonial roof.
- MR TRELAWNEY** . Her husband.
- DORIS O'CARROLL** . A young Society girl, full of life, and always one century ahead of the

times, consequently one who may be more fitly described as a twenty-first-century girl, or a human bullet shot aimlessly about from place to place.

LADY VIOLET DENE . A woman belonging to the end of the nineteenth century and still existing in this one, to whom face, figure and clothing represented so much valuable capital, which, skilfully managed, adjusted and combined with continuous unexampled deceitfulness, secured for this type of woman everything necessary to her material existence, from her natural bait, man, by appealing to his lower senses.

THE DEAN A literary ecclesiastic. The writer of *A Guide to Heaven, with Map*, and many other very remunerative religious books and pamphlets.

MR LOUIS VOLVOIS . An author, in love with Doris.

(And some other minor Guests of the House-Party.)

PART I
THE OUTER HUSK OF LIFE

The Married Bachelor

CHAPTER I

THE MEETING OF LUCIUS MACNAMARY AND VALERIE TRELAWNEY

"Marriage comes unawares, like a soot-drop!"—*Irish Proverb.*

"L'MARIAGE est une science!—but Divorce seems to be the only possible chance of happiness in these days for people who will marry, judging from the newspapers!" remarked a woman cynically. "Yet the divorce market seems to have dropped several points lately. Ah! we live in a very rapid age, dear! Progressive is not the word for it! Pour faire un bon ménage il faut que l'homme soit sourd et la femme aveugle. Oh! I'm not mad. Really only married! But, alas! Reformation by any new thought has always been regarded as treason in the past!" she added, laughing.

There was momentary silence.

"Pour l'ordinaire, la fortune nous vend bien chèrement ce qu'on croit qu'elle nous donne! Ah! we were discussing the great future of marriage, were we not? That form of mediæval torture. Well, it is a stale problem which everyone is horribly tired of at the present day. In spite of this, believe me, the question of marriage and sex stands before the twentieth century as its chief solution. We have to face it. A newspaper said, 'There should be certificated brides and bridegrooms. If a young man desires to be a

solicitor or a doctor, he has to pass certain test examinations. Yet, when he proposes to marry, and the welfare of his life is at stake, and that of a live young woman, they are left to uninstructed nature, with results in deplorable ruination of lives, and the consequent perturbation of social relations. No man in future,' this bold newspaper says, 'should marry without having obtained a certificate showing he has passed an examination in matrimonial science—the bride to obtain her *testamur* from a board of lady professors in a *viva-voce* examination.' It should indeed be a scientific study—the *physiologie du mariage*, and temperaments, emotions, compulsory subjects.

"And why are people tired of this problem? Simply because no one has been sufficiently brilliant to exactly solve it. Heigh-ho! It is just like Home Rule for Ireland. As Mr Chamberlain once said, 'A snake scotched but not yet killed.' Now I, for the good of my fellow-creatures, am determined now to solve it!"

She was silent again for a few moments.

"There are, however, limitations to one's perceptive powers. It took seven centuries, since the landing of 'Strongbow,' to settle the political relation of Ireland and England, and it's not settled yet; this is similar. For to-day, I've had enough of the marriage question, and to change it I was just saying to Suzanne we women don't live nowadays, we simply dress. Alas! still too much uniformity and *cliquant*. We smile and pose, and if you are a woman you must consider your appearance; for we live, not in glass houses, but under microscopes, surrounded by the unreal crust of conventionality. Our conversation is lost. We are merely now like paragraphs in the *journaux* of the 'doings of others.' Whether you are beautiful or not depends entirely on—let me see!—first, your tea-gown, that is the *dernier cri* to express the

MEETING OF LUCIUS AND VALERIE 5

delights of the *dolce far niente*, the charm of confidential chats, *en tête-à-tête*. Next, your tempestuous poetical petticoat, an article of *luxe*, and lastly, your thoughts. Now, look at me!—the modern woman. Only a matter of thoughts, dear one, and teagown, and—oh!—oh! ——”

The sparkling, lively young woman who was speaking ceased suddenly. The situation was decidedly awkward. She was for once in her life taken un-awares. She had entered a dimly-lighted room, begun to chat joyfully and ridiculously, thinking she was talking to a great woman-friend, to find,—that she had made a grave mistake. Only a moment or two before, *certainly*, she *had* left her hostess sitting *there*, peacefully in an armchair drawn up before the fire, and now, to her intense dismay, she found her friend had disappeared.

In the chair, a stranger was sitting, whom she never remembered having seen anywhere before. Instantly he arose, bowed to her with a curious natural grace—distinctly his own—and pushed the cosiest chair, towards her. In that fleeting moment, she noticed that he was a figure of medium height, a very distinguished-looking, handsome man, broad, well-proportioned, dark enough for a Spaniard, with the jet-black brilliant eyes of the South, and his hair tinged grey-white above a high, wide forehead. Glancing again, she saw a splendid head, with a classic profile, a face of *esprit*, with something of the rapt look of a man of profound thought, and yet, in spite of the deep lines above his eyes, her impression of him was that he was not old—scarcely beyond middle-age.

He had a very studious, scholarly look, distinct refinement of face and figure, evidently a man tolerably well disciplined, as far as one could judge from the outer form, having all his mental powers, of great tactile sensibility and delicacy of nervous organism. Lucius Macnamary was his name. A man, with

unassailable position behind him, looking with disdain upon the new fortunes crowding into Society. An exhausted, cynical man of the world too, beset with life's activities, occasionally one of the most *blase* of creatures who at the same time possessed the secret of growing young with each spring, and who occasionally had a rare power of embodying subtle thought into curious humour. It happened that this man, with an overgrown brain and petrified heart, flattered himself always that he was an incomparable psychologist, and that he knew most intimately and exhaustively the female heart, and that he was also a marvellously equipped high priest of femininity. He took a melancholy interest in his own consciousness, but, like nearly all his sex, was still full of vanity and the illusion of the personal self, and up to the present his love-affairs, even his marriage, seemed to have been conducted upon sheer experimental methods. He had once a great thirst for exploring the world, and, like many other men, had met so many ridiculous self-seeking creatures with impulses not under proper control and passions much stronger than their minds. He had thrown for happiness, and somehow it seemed to him he had drawn a losing number. Each day made him look forward with relief to his return to his old bachelor existence, and, which all married men, he said, should have, his own "bachelor retreat."

The woman was a lovely young creature in the zenith of her beauty. Her face had a laughing expression, mischief and roguery gleamed in her eyes, perpetually moving her lips and the corners of her mouth. Her hair was a vivid red, and nature's own hue of that particular curling golden-red brown glory, composed by Titian and Raphael. Her eyes matched brown, and her voice was like the melody of far-off bells; while her glorious health one saw at a glance—her youth, her wonderful vitality. A sunny being,

MEETING OF LUCIUS AND VALERIE 7

truly, brimful of *espiglerie*, almost American in her zest and enthusiasm, her face ever changing, bright with the flowers of thought and fancy. She was draped in an invidious white and primrose Empire tea-gown, a happy marriage of colour, covered with priceless point d'Alençon lace in which pale saffron tea-roses were fastened. Apparently a very worldly young woman, clever enough to invariably strike an individual note in her mode of dressing, which she often said "was difficult in modern days, when to look like a well-dressed woman and a lady, instead of merely a fashion-plate, is fashionable only in Paris, not in London."

In spite of all her apparent worldliness and frivolity, there were about her strange qualities that could lay their charm upon modern sceptics and exhausted cynical human beings. In her usual moods she often appeared to the external world a type of the sort of weary victim, with a house in Grosvenor Square, the latest thing in motors, and, of course, a husband who adored but misunderstood her; the latter being now the most urgent necessity of the "weary victim," up-to-date, fashionable type of womanhood and motherhood. But being fashionable she hungered for sympathy, panted for romance, believing herself capable of the "grand passion," and was always full of such artless prattling, one could never discover which was innocence or cleverness. This lady's present lack of history disturbed all her gossip-loving friends. Women, of course, were all against her, and all one heard about her was of no consequence, as being wrung from woman's greatest enemy—woman.

"This is a scientific age indeed; yet it is a curious feature of modern life to keep strictly to absurd convention, which forbids discussion on that department of ethics which relates to the marriage institution, as you say," said the man, thinking

of her first remarks as she had entered the room, wishing to make some reply, and bowing again, with a somewhat amused expression in his eyes.

"Oh! I left my friend, our hostess, here only two moments ago awaiting my return," answered she apologetically, taking the seat offered. "We were enjoying a very 'confidential' chat. But some new thought has probably entered her busy brain for the enjoyment of her guests. Was there ever such an energetic, kind personality?"

The man now sat opposite. A glittering tea-table was between them. "It is beyond doubt that the woman before me is looking radiantly lovely," was his thought. He had so often told himself that he cared nothing for a woman's external appearance, mere physical charms; that he only cared for mind and character. "Yes," he then remarked quietly aloud, "My recollection of our mutual friend and hostess is that she has wonderful hospitable talents. I abhor house-parties. I look upon them as fearsome things, as a rule, conspicuous only for their oppressive dulness and stiffness. I have not been to one of that sort for years. But my visits to Lady Mary Ambrose—they occur once in every ten years—I look upon as the most delightful weeks of my life."

This was true. During the seasons, when monied London empties itself into Scottish shooting-boxes and "peripatetic" yachts, he was usually shut up like a hermit in his study.

"Could *anyone* resist such a charming woman—and one who has a delightful faculty for looking more youthful than any of her own very young daughters? A hostess ever creating the most delicious surprises, who makes friends with entertaining clever, original people, and mixes them so successfully with the fashionable 'parrot' nonsensical set—to which I unfortunately belong—and all for mutual entertainment."

MEETING OF LUCIUS AND VALERIE 9

"To say nothing of her quantity of marvellous chefs," added the man lazily.

She looked at him quickly. That was not the remark she expected from this man. How she detested men who talked about their dinners, cooks, wines, and all such old coarse accompaniments of a past stage of Evolution, when people lived to eat, instead of merely eating to live.

One quick glance, too fleeting to be apparent, and he had read her thoughts. All she saw was a curious smile.

"Is it not better to be old-fashioned and interested in—er—one's chef, for instance, than to merely dress, or perhaps write poetry, pose, or gaze sentimentally at the stars, lose a fortune every day gambling, or kill ten people a day showing off one's new motor.—By the way, a nice invigorating exercise Society loves before lunch—have an aviary and feed birds, or, like our friend the 'Prince of First Gem-water,' become a sort of walking jeweller's shop, or write forty-seven letters a month to entice a member of Royalty to lunch with you, receiving forty-six excuses before attaining one's object? Or to keep pet be-ribboned dogs and spray them with expensive scent every morning, little epicures of boudoirs and—sewers; or—or——"

"Yes," she interrupted, ignoring the slight sarcasm in his tone, "Or indeed any other of the latest whims of Society's 'Puppet Show' of our latter-day well-groomed, dining-out masculine 'social confections,' dabbling in the social sea of fripperies. Yes, perhaps so."

Nevertheless, she felt annoyed that he had so very easily read all her inward thoughts and the reflection of her mind, and wondered.

"May I give you some tea?" she asked, after a little silence.

Gradually from that they chatted on again, easily

and as merrily as a marriage-bell. Before her arrival he had been sitting by the fireside, after a few words with his hostess and was in one of his most morbid, introspective moods. His manner had been bored, unmovable, uncurious. In his life had arisen the headsman's axe—disillusion in the shape of introspection. Now, all the time he listened and answered her, his mind was perspicuous and his inner self was saying with his inward mental real voice, "The face opposite, with its complexion like the wilding rose, is that of an impressionable, emotional woman. The light shadows and smiles remind me of the fleeting clouds which shift and shadow the sunset outside. Somehow her rich voice lures me to forget all my disappointments. Why is it? Perhaps this is the woman who years ago might easily have possessed some power over me. Of course I mean years ago, when I was a younger man and more foolish." At heart he was always a romanticist, an idealist, an intuitionist, something of a mystic and dreamer; but now this grave, cynical student of life and character appeared to pull himself up, and his face looked hard, stern and cold.

"Yet, a shallow, giddy creature, of course, of whom a student of human nature would say *la femme incomprise! la femme incomprise!*" inwardly he assured himself. But man's objective sense perceptions are illusions or deceptive appearances, and our outward senses never tell us the real truth. He had not outgrown the follies of the lower world, or realised the beauties of the high. He was very far away from the state of the highly evolved spiritual man, in whom wisdom, will, activity, should work in co-ordinated harmony. Man's sense of right and wrong grows only from experience, and is elaborated by suffering.

It had been an exquisite dreamy afternoon, the sky glowing in rich, deep, almost Italian colouring.

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The darkness was now falling early. 'Twas evening. Outside was an incoherent sunset, which for a few wonderful moments bathed sky and sea in red glory, crimsoning the trees, sombre yews, hills, the tendrilled creepers and rosebushes, colouring a snowfall of white clematis, that twined around the windows at will, and staining with orange the river winding like a thread below. Above, the evening clouds floated like masses of amethyst, seeming to disappear one by one, gradually changing their violet colouring for the dark sapphire hues of blessed night; the scene thus strangely and swiftly seeming diaphanous and unreal in its twilight beauty. The hours now were those of mysterious softness, when hearts reveal their sweetness, as flowers open to the night. So brief and so lovely is this hour of illusion that our conceptions of the mere physical plane of nature often become enlarged to get impressions or glimpses of more subtle planes than those usually observed.

The long low room in which they sat, with groined roof and oaken rafter, was certainly not conspicuous for exquisite simplicity. It was as elaborately tasteful as the art of the day could contrive, and in it an extraordinary example of oak-carving. There were several French windows opening upon terraces, from where many views of the surrounding hills could be seen. The house had once been an old manor, but was now a structure of great architectural merit. Inside, the room held antique historical French furniture of perfect design, the walls were painted in fresco, with wreaths of foliage and carefully arranged bunches of marvellously executed blossoms. A delightful conservatory was at the side, filled with choice flowers and plants, blue grapes, dripping moss; then an aviary, where happy songsters made music; and beyond, a palm-house with a beautiful mosaic floor, which completed the ideal scheme of

that portion of the dwelling. The host had elevated tastes and was an enthusiastic gardener, especially devoted to orchids, obtaining most gorgeous colour effects. The house itself was in the thirteenth century style, with the site of the village stocks still in the garden, and a huge archway over the odd entrance, which left one totally unprepared for the new arrangement of part of the interior and the splendid reception-rooms built lately. The owner's genius for design, profound knowledge of classic forms, and wonderful originality, had made of it an unique, fascinating residence steeped in the true spirit of the Renaissance. Some of the rooms had been described by an uninitiated English visitor as "weird" and "bizarre," but those were the rooms kept especially for entertaining, and from an artistic point of view, perhaps, were a little too daring, and swore a little at the other perfect ones, designed especially by the hostess for the home, with their sturdy lines of old oak, always fascinating to the true English taste. But the dining-hall, the gallery with all its lovely pictures—Vandyck, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Rubens, Romney, Greuze—the cedar library, with ceiling exquisitely inlaid with red and white cedar, its fireplace in a deep recess supported by white and black marble columns, and about it a little winding staircase where one could sit quietly hidden away over the mantelshelf, on which is carved a quaint motto, were all most beautiful rooms. The oriel window of painted glass in the hall, with the arms of the family, threw a bewitching, ever-changing coloured light upon everything, and overlooked the quaint Dutch garden. The man and the woman thus left together had continued talking to each other for several minutes, easily and naturally.

"Our hostess and I are exactly the same age, and we were brought up like sisters," she was saying.

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It occurred to her to tell him this now, as they had grown more and more interested in each other every moment that had passed.

"You did not know? Oh, I thought everyone knew. We were both orphans, adopted by the dear old fairy godmother to whom this stately house belonged. Our relations came over during the French Revolution, and our ancestors were guillotined; then our grandfathers lived here, in the humblest way, in England for safety. We were to be her heiresses, share her wealth, jewels, and lands. But by some strange perverseness of fate, when her will was read, she had made Mary her sole heiress, and I had nothing—perhaps because I married so young, and a man of whom she did not approve. Anyway, that is what happened. Fortunately, I required nothing, for my husband, in addition to his ancient name, and all his other charms, possessed as well that envied possession of all others—a *city man's income*!" she exclaimed, laughing again. "I did not regret the lands; the wealth, and even the disapproval my godmother's plans caused, which occasioned much gossip, wore off. But there was one thing I did regret a little. On our sixteenth birthdays she took us to her room of rooms, unlocked a wonderful cabinet, and showed us her jewels—those she had previously sent for from her bankers. Dividing them, she said: 'They are for you, my children, to be divided between you at my death, but I give you each your stones of your own month. Mary shall have all the pearls, and you the rubies.' Speaking to me, she said: 'Wear this necklace to-day, on your birthday, to match your eyes, lips, and these in your hair, to give even more life and colour to it; but to-morrow they must return to the bank, to lie again until I am dead, for you are too young for such regal stones as rubies.' That day, on my sixteenth birthday, I was allowed to wear a primrose frock as a setting for the

rubies and my face. They were of such size, such rich and dazzling brilliancy, that the eye almost ached at beholding them. I now have jewels of my own, but none I love so much as that ruby necklace, for her sake. They were all heart-shaped, enclosed within a border of that knightly flower, the *fleur de souvenance*. Yet she left even that away from me. After this story, draw your own conclusions as to the very wicked person I am."

"Your godmother was wise: you require no jewels," returned the man very quietly, with surgical coolness.

Womanlike, she laughed softly.

"Ah! That is a charming compliment. "You are an artist, in your sympathy and delicate flattery."

He rose and took her cup from her hand. He felt intensely annoyed with himself, for he so repeatedly assured himself that he was now a woman-hater, and had developed almost into a lonely anchorite,—a Samniyasi, as he found his favourite Indian books termed that state of mind, or of consciousness, he had fallen into. On turning, he trod upon something on the floor, and picked it up. "It must have fallen from the table," he said, opening it carelessly. "Ah!" laughing scornfully, "someone has actually been reading a daintily bound book of poems, intensely sentimental of course. How well these things are contrived now. Look at the cover: who could resist it? But, as for reading it, is it possible anyone could be so absurd?" He had himself been reading and studying a book called "*The Complexity and Subtlety of the Human Emotions*," and another, "*The Metaphysics of Ethics*." Some words in the latter occurred to him now: "Ethics are called 'The Science of Conduct.' Man is not an isolated unit, but merely a part of an organic whole. In far-off days we see an infant humanity, strong in passions

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instead of reasoning powers, plunging madly at the entrance to the path of morality."

Once he had excelled himself in *vers de société*, and even political squibs. He had a peculiar range of endowments, combining triumph in Modern Society with study of higher range of poetry. He went on speaking, as he turned to the inside page, "Valerie Trelawney." "The owner, of course," he added contemptuously; "whoever that lady may be, she is absurdly sentimental and poetically inclined, for so many of the ridiculous verses are marked with pencil. How piteous! I say. Excuse my impatience, but sentimentalism, poetry, and all that nonsense, is so painfully antagonistic and fatal to modern progress. Indeed, I believe they are the outward signs of mental diseases that belonged to the early part of the nineteenth century. This lady is a disappointed creature, no doubt, dreaming still of love and the other dangerous illusions of life."

"Indeed!" The woman had been smiling. She now drew herself up, staring at him deliberately. "Yes, you are right," at last she said, firmly, in something of his own cool tone. "All that belonged to the beautiful days when we rose and retired by daylight, and when friends in prosperity were often friends in adversity too—a far-off, bygone age." To herself she thought, "He is a man of great individuality, with much mannerism."

"You are the most discerning man I ever met," she continued, "you have described the lady most accurately. She is a friend of mine, a silly, sentimental creature with a scraggy neck, dreaming of love and all the piteous absurdities of life. Oh! how idiotic some women are still in these days of enlightenment and progress, when men and women should meet only on the common ground of human brotherhood and sisterhood, as of life's workers! Piteous, as you say, 'Love' is no longer a permissible

disease ; and as for heroes and heroines, fairy princes, as in poetry books and romances, they all died out ages ago—if they ever existed except in the imagination of authors and other lunatics and wild-fowl—of course, not forgetting the imagination of sickly females. The heroes and romances of this century are too ludicrous. I will describe them to Valerie, too, this creature more given to romance than reality, when I have an opportunity. But they are something like this: The men of this age have developed one sense more than all the others, and that a keen insight into pounds, shillings, and pence. In real life, heroes must be four-score, and no woman of less than sixty is reckoned to have collected experience and money enough necessary to make her an interesting person. Fairy godmothers can't find any true lovers to protect, because the race of them is extinct. We are too much at the mercy of the last impression, are we not? Plays even are without passion, because the world doesn't like violent emotion—after dinner. Men and women do not meet each other now as they used in the dear old days—as I believe they do still in really nice novels—with wild flashes of emotion, amid romantic surroundings—trees misted with green leaves, etc. Don't you know the thing of the popular novel?—the air blowing amorously about her blushing cheek, and hiseyes—any way, finale—marriage-bells!"

"Yes, those were the days," chimed in the man contemptuously, "of caballeros, of black velvet jackets, silver-trimmed hats, of embroidered serapes, of donnas with flashing eyes, and duennas with—er—suspicious ones—eh?"

"Well, as you say, all that is exploded," she continued. "We all meet now, don't we? three times of an evening at Society balls—generally fancy dress. Oh! is this, or is it not, a good and romantic age? The modern Juliet is attired in a

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dress reaching only to her knees, copied from the latest popular comedy. He—the up-to-date Romeo, hero, fairy prince, lover, man, whatever you like to call the creature—is a portly figure, making a mild sensation dancing around the ball-room in a French bathing costume, or something of that sort. In place of sword and helmet, bath-towels and such paraphernalia.

“Indeed, often she is attired as a Spanish cavalier in doublet and hose, with mock, up-twisted moustache and sombrero hat, or, perhaps, as a Bonnie Prince Charlie in a kilt—in a Society paper I saw a titled lady’s photograph in this character the other day—or a brief petticoated shepherdess, with a little woolly lamb led by a string; he occasionally as a most undesirable chef. Next day they renew their acquaintance at her club for a game of billiards. You see, we women know how well we look over the green cloth. That is why the women’s clubs have started them; and when women’s clubs start anything now, the stage follows first, then even the churches, and every other organisation of man. After that they go to a music hall, which is the fashionable thing to do, and listen to ‘Polly Perkins was a Chambermaid,’ or ‘The Costermonger with Ge’manly Instincts,’ or any other sufficiently ‘Billingsgate’ but fashionable love-making impressions. By the way, it was good, versatile Dan Leno who said, ‘London’s principal industries now are music halls and the confidence trick.’ After, they go to a grill supper, given by a marchioness, and make love in the plain, unromantic, but very progressive (it’s nothing if it isn’t progressive) twentieth-century fashion, at intervals between the courses of ‘devilled’ bones and toasted cheese. He making an inward mental calculation as regards her father’s fortune; she wondering if a title—and nothing else—is really worth having, after all, however cheap; she generally now, in these wide-awake

days, after first allowing him to propose in nine different attitudes and varying keys, deciding to buy a nice, cute, fluffy little puppy with the money instead."

The woman stopped to take breath, and to give him an opportunity of speaking, or, rather, to recover. But as he was silent, she continued:

"The fashionable, languid, weary woman's year consists in dressing, eating, gambling, travelling and yawning. Where the French courtiers walked in the Tuileries and discussed Voltaire's last satire, or Rousseau's latest theory, we, like 'Ennui' taking her saunterings, walk in the Row, discuss fiscalities, appendicitis and the Stock Exchange, to carry us through our wearied lives. Now, another up-to-date romance! My friend's clever son falls in love with one whom he describes as a very fresh young creature. After many months of desperate, impassioned love-making, in which he nearly loses his life in Paris in a duel for her sake, he suddenly discovers that the object of his devotion is ninety-two last birthday, and he is her own grandson. What he had described as a very fresh young creature was the perfection of Art, combined with the 'latest mental training of the newest psychological school.' He promptly cut his throat, which was truly heart-rending, was it not? Ah! but Art is long now, and Life is short and fleeting!"

"No," hazarded the man coolly, "it made one fool less. The extinction of fools spells progress!"

"Well, give me the dear old-fashioned romances, poetry and women," she laughed, looking at him, and wondering why he did not look more shocked.

But he looked at her tranquilly from under his half-closed eyelids. He had already acknowledged to himself that he admired her. But, of course, when he admired women at all, it was always wonderful, great, fair women, with that particular shade of red-

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golden hair, and he was beginning to forget that he had schooled himself to ignore external appearances.

"Perhaps those abrupt romances, and with such extremely sensible endings—soon over—are the best. It really is not altogether a wholesome exercise to tear a passion to tatters. The world wallows in those sort of novels, by the way. Nor can it be said that minute dissection of the emotions redounds to the strength and virility of the human intelligence," said Lucius Macnamary, this something of an inveterate egomaniac, in his most scientific, intellectual voice.

"Intelligence!—oh, pooh! for intelligence!" returned the woman, in a contradictory mood. "Mephistopheles was not lacking in intelligence, was he? Men, now, know nothing of goodness or love, which is better than cleverness and intelligence. In our romances of to-day we are simply like Columbus discovering new worlds," she ejaculated gaily. "Personally, I am a lady; not always as—er—delicate in my language as I might be, but I am thankful to say I am direct, and I have an unfailing instinct of the proper *mise-en-scène*. I am not an archaic piece of furniture belonging to a period that forgot its natural humour in its devotion to sentiment, in spite of my name being—er—Valerie Trelawney! I hope I am governed by robust common-sense after all. Now, perhaps, you know me a little. At twenty-nine one can discuss one's romances without emotion. One has just then passed the brief period of bud-hood, you know!"

"Perhaps you are like Fielding—your thoughts all steeped in a happier atmosphere of wit and reasonableness," he said, his eyes now gazing at her with dissecting and disconcerting keenness.

"Your expression makes one feel analysed, or speared on a hook for future reference," she said, smiling, growing bolder and more mischievous. "Well, even in the days of my youth, so far behind

me now, I never was much disposed towards the eternal type of virtuous girl with a Shakespearian quality about her. I like people with a decided shade of immorality about them. I am a Bohemian in all my ideals, thoroughly wicked, worldly; and my most exciting, exhilarating occupation is dissecting the strange, weird emotions of man, and studying life and human nature."

"Our age is now, I will admit, unromantic," agreed Lucius, smiling also. "Like the pin upon the periwinkle—abrupt, direct, cruel."

"I study the hearts of men and women too," continued the woman, with merry twinkles in her eyes, "and I take care I am never *the broken-hearted one*. The broken-hearted man is always interesting, but a woman—ridiculous, with a red nose. Yes, I study the hearts of men, that I may know the world in which I live, of which I am a part."

He looked at her calmly, outwardly his face appearing immovable and expressionless. He understood her, for he was aided by an exceptionally sensitive mental organism.

"No man is my enemy—no man my friend. All alike are my teachers," continued Valerie Trelawney seriously.

Lucius Macnamary was a great reader. The day before he had been studying his book, *The Complexity of the Human Emotions*, and was thinking of it. He was of wonderfully sensitive organism. If ever he put before him a letter without opening it, he could trace the thoughts to the brain of the writer, and see with closed eyes a pictorial representation of the room in which it was written, however far away. His mind invariably knew mind, without the medium of words; his mental and intellectual consciousness was developing, and his power growing daily in the mental world. This was his power, but at present he was full of prejudice, antagonistic scepticism, and

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deep-rooted theories, not appreciating to the full value his gift of knowing every supersensuous truth with certainty.

He was now silent, his positive mind unconsciously radiating and emitting. The thought came to him that he would never get tired of looking at the woman before him. "It is crazy! Ah! but it is always enchanting to sit and talk to a charming, vivacious, lovely woman at this hour, the twilight," he excused himself. For years he had tried to train himself to have complete power over his thoughts, steeled himself to put from his mind and memory every idea that he felt was one which retarded the evolution of his inner consciousness; yet, to-day he was making it an unwilling slave to the external world, allowing outside thoughts and influences to enter his mind of their own accord, in happy haphazard, uncontrolled by sense or reason. He was actually allowing himself to become negative to outside influences again. It seemed to him that, sitting near her, she brought a subtle combination of the scent of odoriferous violets and other familiar flowers that pervaded him and brought him to earth. It was a curious thing that they could so easily divine each other's thoughts. Had he been in the least a sentimental man he might have inferred from this that their souls were in perfect sympathy. But he said to himself that he was a much too practical man to think of souls or any of the latest thought-religion of the day. He was not even sure if anyone had souls—"a fact yet to be proved," he had said many times. But the woman was now as quick as he had been previously in divining her thoughts; she caught the expression in his eyes, and burst into a real merry unaffected laugh.

"Now, I'm sure the realistic sketches I have given you do me credit!" she ejaculated. "Someone once paid me a great compliment, and said I should have

been an actress, and, horrible to relate, I have a leaning towards the music halls. Do you know, I believe I should have made a hit in the music halls. They are organisations capable of much improvement, and could be made to greatly educate and improve the masses who go nowhere else for amusement and enlightenment."

The man opened his eyes; this was indeed being brought to earth.

"This is exactly the sort of way to talk to a man who has found your wretched pet poetry book of your own composing, with all the most sickening, sentimental verses marked. I think I may venture to flatter myself that he will forget it is mine after this. I am really sufficiently interested in this droll creature not to wish him to remember me as that sickly green creature known as 'Valerie Trelawney'!" thought the woman.

He sat a few moments in silence, looking at her with positive disapproval. Yet, curiously enough, he had never wished so much to be free. A carefully banished thought came to him—the memory of a most unhappy marriage. Like many other men in the world, in this century—good men, too—he lived now the life of a bachelor, but he was a married man. He had a hard fight to keep this thought from his brain. Every day he occupied his mind with other thoughts, purposely to keep this one away. "Banish everything unpleasant from the mind," was his selfish motto.

His wife and he lived most separate lives. The history of their misunderstanding was made up of commonplace, well-nigh sordid quarrels, that slow process by which tiny rifts become chasms that no efforts of outsiders can bridge. Truly, a tragedy of modern wedlock. He had developed intelligence, but it was intelligence wholly subordinated to desire: he had, as yet, no recognition of the transitoriness of

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all earthly material things. In spite of efforts, he had a hard struggle to keep the fact from recurring to his memory that he was married, and not really a bachelor and free. He nursed imaginary grievances in the solitude of his den, although to the outer world he and his wife lived irreproachable lives. He began to wonder what this woman's experience of that lottery had been. Somehow he hoped she longed for freedom as much as he did. "It must be so," he told himself, "or there could not be such sympathy between us; for, that matrimony nowadays contains vast reaches of boredom, no one can deny," he thought. He allowed an atmosphere of suspicion, self-neglect, and a state of impotent obstinacy to surround him.

By nature a diplomatist, he said, without taking any notice of her last remark, "Women have a mysterious power and knowledge of things, an intuition that brooks no argument. Tell me, you who laugh, too, at sentiment and modern sordid love, are there then no women left on earth of the old school who used to see in man—often a most commonplace creature—their ideal? Have all women ceased to love and idolise the one man of their choice, as they used to do—well, not so very long ago?"

"The usual sort of story-book thing, you mean?" said the woman abruptly, not liking his questions, and somehow he had sunk to Lilliputian stature in her eyes. "Yes, I think they have, at last," she said firmly. "They've grown very wide-awake, and see men as they are, not as they wish to appear."

"What is the reason of this change? Can you tell me?" he hazarded to ask once more.

"Yes, of course I can. The change is simply the result of the gradual evolution of woman, as development changes everything else in due time and brings things to a proper order. You see, love and unselfishness and pain are the most ennobling

factors for the raising, ennobling and perfecting of the human race. They are virtues belonging to the True Life, and not Life as men understand it, as they have existed all these centuries under the absurd delusion that they have been living. Well, these virtues have thrown their light upon women, and women alone, throughout the centuries or ages. Consequently, is it not easy to understand that the half of the human race represented by woman has developed sooner, has left the other half as represented by man, far, far behind? In fact, man, who has descended straight from the ape, evolved to a certain point, and then he went back. The reason of this was, that the chief light thrown on him was selfishness, self-gratification and pleasure. In fact, he is getting nearer and nearer back to his old shape which he sprung from, every century back to his old animal ancestor." She looked at him now and sighed deeply, and then smiled charmingly, curious to see how he liked this allusion to his distant relative.

"Il vaut mieux être singe perfectionné qu'un Adam dégénéré," repeated the man in an undertone. "Possibly, then, man has a great claim, after all, on woman for gratitude, for the ages of unselfishness and pain he has caused her, thus ennobling her and developing her before himself unselfishly at the expense of his own degeneration—eh? But you have not replied to my question," he went on in his same level voice.

"Ah! it was always so," exclaimed the woman. "Men are ever more ready to ask curious questions than to receive necessary instruction. Well, ask yourself? Is it possible for a race of 'angels' to look down and form any ideals now about man, when in these days they look upon him as an undeveloped vicious savage animal who has caged them so long?" Here there was a long pause. "But I am no expert in the matters of the heart; yet," she added, breaking the

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silence again, "you see a woman no longer desires man's estimate of her as half-angel half-idiot. However, seriously, believe me a woman's friendship is of much more value than her love, that ridiculous old-fashioned adoring adoration. 'L'amitié est l'amour sans ailes.'"

"No, friendship has a cold unwelcome sound. 'L'amour apprend aux ânes à danser.'"

She did not reply, only laughed again merrily, so he continued: "Do you know, before you came into the room I was reading that book which had fallen to the ground. I read all the verses marked, and I began to dream again as I used to, oh! years ago, of an ideal woman—my ideal, of course—a person I never met: that goes without saying. A marriage of two souls made one—perfect sympathy, perfect equality of mind; a marriage which I am afraid will never be realised in this world, only in a higher one, where people are laws to themselves, where their whole environment is in perfect harmony with an inward life, not an everlasting discord, as it is in this undeveloped planet. The old traditional views of marriage are in the crucible, I am afraid. Do you not think so? People are beginning to see that we must not lock iron chains to the Present, which served their purpose in the Past; that although there are many beautiful truths in the Bible and Church Service, yet many of their leadings belong to a stage outgrown, and we must be guided by conscience, reason, individual intelligence, not past creeds. What is right for one may be very wrong for another."

With the lucidity of instinct he noticed something he had said had depressed her.

"Marriage is a desperate thing," she returned. "The frogs in *Æsop* were wise. They had a great mind to some water, but they would not leap into the well, because they could not get out again—wise, sensible

frogs! That is just the solution I require, perhaps, to my problem. We can learn from frogs."

"Ah! you were very gay when you burst into the room and found me; now you are melancholy. My thoughts, my moods, have possibly depressed you," he said repentantly. Never in his life had he had a conversation like this with any woman upon so short an acquaintance.

At last she turned her face towards him again and ejaculated:

"You romantic! Ah! yes; now I look at you, there is perhaps something romantic about your eyes. Well, woman has become an economic unit. She demands of man that she shall no longer be considered a chattel in the marriage market."

From the open windows of the conservatory came a breath of evening air, the scent of flowers—of Safrano, Catherine Meret, and Marie Van Houtte roses—yellow flushed pink,—a "Princess de Sagan," the red rose which can awaken spring even in a dead heart—and other odorous things coming with it. Outside were the deer, bidden to hide in leafy ways. Approaching the window, they were each listening to the sound of the cooing birds, one of curious note, now loud, now soft, broken by the screeching of a parrot. He was one of those men not designed for husbands—that is, under the present marriage institution, with its monotony and conventionalities—but who make the staunchest of friends. We all have our limitations. The Law of development is wrought into the very fibre of humanity, and must soon show itself more clearly to be read, breaking old chains and conventions, bringing reforms, helping those blinded with ignorance in the lower world, when the higher and lower find themselves in conflict. The very presence of discord denotes disharmony with the Law.

Lucius Macnamary was a man of intellect, a man of the world. He had not yet arrived at the

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realisation of the worthlessness of all objects of ambition with which worldly men busy themselves, nor had he yet learned to separate his passions from his divine possibilities. His spirit was only conscious that it was somehow chained and fast bound in misery like iron. It neither strove nor cried, it only suffered passively, looking sometimes upon its fetters with a dull curiosity, not understanding Nature's Law and Order.

These two people had each reached a state of development which was the result of living in the outside frivolous social world, with its vivid vibrations and sensations, without arriving at the true understanding of life and themselves. They were blinded for the time by the matter that veiled them, and the subtle influences of personality upon personality, with wine in their blood, and immortal youth still at life's springs. But there are tides in the human heart, as in the affairs of men, and as in the sea—God's Order, God's Law, working slowly, steadily on and on—the same tides that bring each one of us to our birthing—our marriage, true and untrue, of body and of spirit—and to our death-day. For, fight as we will, ignore it as we will, no man can stop the mighty march of Divine Evolution. The Future for all lies outstretched in a limitless panorama of a never-beginning, never-ending Present, and we will soon realise that "Love is the secret of life," true Love, not as it is understood to-day. And when we realise that, our mastering minds will also grow to see that what is to-day for some the great unseen, is not for any, if steadily sought for, also the great unknown.

The next task, however, that lies before us, is of the shaping, not shattering, of our old institutions, to fit the altered features of a new age. The attitude of the masses towards the classes is still critical. Many, still, of the lower and middle classes believe that Englishwomen of the highest Society live only

to dress the person in gorgeous apparel, and become drunk with wine and drugs—are going always, so to speak, “to the dogs,” accompanied by Englishmen, travelling faster ; that Modern Society is a cheerful disarray of illicit relations ; that lives are mostly passed in massage, manicure, baths, skin treatment, rest cures, whilst old women with completely new faces, leases of beauty, full of “devilment,” now are representing the rottenness, infamy, and vulgarity of the Society of to-day. But, curious as it appears, out of great disorder, out of conditions, much of which all observe with disgust and contempt, loathe and cannot understand, there is unfolded a Divine ordering of things, which sees ultimate good in seeming evil.

CHAPTER II

AFTERNOON GOSSIP

"Les sots depuis Adam sont en majorité."—DELAUVIGNÉ.

"Les races se féminisent."

A VOICE singing a song broke in and disturbed the birds' sweet music; then came the sound of a banjo getting nearer. At last a young girl, with spontaneous *bon enfant* gaiety, burst into the room from the conservatory and stood before them.

"Our stories don't end with one's marriage nowadays. They merely begin, and people at house-parties have to occasionally cough, in a preparatory manner, before bouncing upon others. New moods, new ways and fashions, elude analysis; and to tell the exact way by which the heart in each of us is moved is beyond my power. By others, I mean other reckless, flirting, up-to-date fashionable 'babies.' Now I sing instead of coughing, although I am about as musical as a frog. Oh! I loathe Society life and flirtations and deceit! I want to run, jump, to take a fence, shoot a grouse, or hook a trout. Well! I've just been out with the guns, and I've had a rippin' time! I thought I'd take a peep in here on my way upstairs, to see if there were any new developments in the way of flirtations. We have one guest, a very breezy widow, of the husband-hunting type. Is there—ahem!—er—any tea? I'm as thirsty as a grouse-shooter in a Scotch August! Yes, I've had a rippin' time! Came upon a curious man; has a house and a little shooting-box near

here called 'The Hut.' Took us all inside. I was struck in a heap with his mode of decorating his den. It was like wading through a sea of herrings. The walls, my dear, literally papered with such weird photographs—French actresses, I believe the ladies were. Liane de Pougy in one corner on an easel, facing an exquisite picture like a Madonna on another. Being of inordinate curiosity, I found still another room; in it astronomical instruments. I don't know what sort of a figure I cut, with my banjo, and Tam-o'-Shanter hat all on one side—not to mention an insecure and damp fringe. The picture of the traditional English girl of French caricature, 'Chams,' I should imagine. The stab of my beauty was too much for him, from the way he stared, his eyes glaring at me like motor-lamps! Valerie, although I pride myself on being a progressive girl, I rarely go about without my reminiscent mamma, as you know, whose faith in mankind is refreshing. Alas! to-day I was alone with the guns! The cause I do not know, but he gazed at me in sort of thunder-struck attitudes. Possibly my drooping style of beauty, combined with mud-stains and a short skirt, looking like a flabby politician, had a paralysing effect on him. Thought I would increase it by sitting on the table, grouping all the men around me, throwing off my shoes and stockings, and posing as 'Trilby'—my real bare 'Trilbies.' I'm like dear Dan Leno: I came into the world a mere child. I changed my mind, however, and returned for a twilight chat with you, Valerie; left all the men creating much noise, heehawing and shrieking in various stages of hilarity. All with quite picturesque thirsts, taking medicines and restoratives in the form of brandies, sodas, liqueurs and cigars."

"Yes, dear, come and chat with us. You always have the most wonderful adventures. I really think sometimes you must imagine them all as you run on, just to try and amuse, and shock us."

"No, no, Val, I am the essence of truth; I am a looker-on of Life. The heart of Truth is appalling. It is a torch—as Goethe says, 'An enormous one, for which reason we approach it blinking, and are afraid of burning ourselves.' By the way, on my way here I passed Lady Violet Dene, after her usual two hours with her hairdresser, flirting—or to be more fashionable—harmlessly engrossed in the epigrams of her sprightly Dean, with a ginger-bread rabbit expression on her face, and running about like a baby of five. It is so odd to me. She seems to find him particularly mirth-provoking—excuse the irreverence. Clerical adoration is the fashion, but his elderly proportions are really too Falstaffian to be effectively poeticised. Why is it, Valerie, that when men, even deans, possess many broad acres and about fifty thousand a year, that widows with new titles find them so mirth-provoking, when you and I find them so heavy? However much I struggle to laugh at his inane remarks, I cannot even raise a ghost of a smile—seeing instead his inane, fatuously smiling, smug features, only fit for the walls of the respectable Royal Academy!"

"You forget, Doris, I do not yet know your good Dean."

"Oh! so you have arrived at last, Lucius," continued the girl. "I suppose this will be a signal for your wife's immediate departure; because you and she, you see, are so very—er—Modern! And, of course, Modern Society, since it's gone in so much for magnetism and soul-sympathy, now recognises fully the fact that well-matched pairs are only in the horse world."

"My wife!" exclaimed the man vaguely.

Lucius' face changed and suddenly flushed.

"Dear me! I had—er—quite forgotten," he murmured, as if he had been confronted with a fact of ancient history. For the moment he

had forgotten she was visiting in the same house.

"Ah! I had also forgotten. You two have only just met. I have known Lucius, Valerie dear, since I was a tot in short skirts, and I always look upon him as a sort of amiable, somewhat mildewed, god-father. But although he is fond of undomestic company, he is not a new century Don Juan, and is as harmless as a kitten. He forgives my spirit of frivolity, and I say anything I like to him now. He described me as a girl of vapoury brains the other day, so I owe him one."

"People have a way of forgiving you everything. Why is it?"

"Oh, well!—I suppose because they can afford to. You see the dear women think they have nothing to fear from me. I take a man about with me as other women take a parasol, and vary him as often, and value him as little, so my poor wretched character is let alone. They gaze with delight upon my mixed complexion, resembling 'mottled soap.' It inspires them with confidence in their own charms, don't you know? One of them called me the other day an elegantly-draped bone. However, I think it better to look like a bone than become stodgy and look like a suet-pudding. And I assure you I am quite a model young woman; thence the amiability shown me. Alas! so runs this wicked world away, in which we laugh—" she stopped, then added with a laugh—"live, and occasionally lie."

"Yes," exclaimed a voice from the window. "Alas! away it runs!—at a nice pace, too. In these days it runs as quickly as—well, for want of a better simile—money and pocket-books at Monte Carlo, from where I have returned 'stony-broke' after one week only."

"Eh! and modern young women with them," chimed in another voice, which possibly was the Dean's.

"Alas! how far off are the days when the world was young, grey and green. An aspiring poet once wrote, you know, 'Oh! how green is this grey world!' I believe he is under the daisies long ago. We are all pappy-brained. I have only just reached the intellectual level of a flea. We are the products of the daily papers, nothing more."

"Doris, you still want another season's experience; you will then know women and their wickedness to each other. You will also perhaps learn the difference between dry and brut champagne, or when to play spades or trumps, and perhaps to appreciate the relative value of a Rhode Island or Kadoka divorce. At present you are only an unwise rattlepate. View points alter values," said a guest who had joined her.

All the merry people now assembled in the room waited for the sounding of a bell, the voices mostly belonging to owners who were perfectly suited to Society, its *nuances*, intimacies and exactions, its purely telegraphese expressions.

"Now, Lady Violet Dean has an interesting history," said Doris, as she sat in a chair near Mrs Trelawney, drinking more tea. "Have you not heard it? Oh, it is quite unsuspected by our kind, sweet hostess. She has another point, too—a good mauve complexion in a subdued light. You see, I am becoming initiated into Society's ways of talking of absent acquaintances; I am getting on. Well, anyway, it is a complexion that doesn't wash or rub off easily in a shower of rain, like mine; that is why I am so interested in it. Lady Vi's bridge parties are even more entertaining than her history: afternoon for ladies only, midnight for men; week-end bridge parties for both sexes."

"Who is without a history of some sort? Can you tell me? What painfully monotonous persons they would be," said Lucius Macnamary.

"Yes, what a world!" agreed Doris; "would that I had been extinguished with the measles. Well, History, Stage One: An engrossing friendship with a prince, lasting ten years. Oh, some of us have a wonderful way of cheating time! This took her half the year to some God-forsaken principality where his property lay. But, alas! for the deceitfulness of man, he ended by marrying a nice black lady and dying, leaving the rest to charity. Most uncharitable of him, I think. Stage Two: The capturing of a little newly-made baronet of twenty-five—made one for some wretched mistake he made in a war. Stage Three: Marriage with the little soldier, in a gorgeous dress with lace, which she declares is old point, and was at one time, at the Vatican, used as a petticoat of one of the dead and gone Popes, and is quite historic and like nothing even in the British Museum. Then a few years of country life as a model country dame. No one saw the husband much: some say he returned to live with his mamma; but, of course, he is quite an unimportant part of her history—husbands are nowadays. By the way, you know, the question now is, Valerie dear, not 'What shall we do with our boys?' but 'What shall we do with our husbands?' Whenever I hear any dear fashionable creatures discussing this great momentous question, I always suggest dynamite, or some such conclusive agency. Well, happily—but, of course, I am an *intriguante*—he died after six months, and she has erected a drinking fountain in her park to his memory, as the most suitable monument to his virtues, and wrote many pretty things about this husband she hopes so advantageously to replace. Now she is here planning a fresh conquest, bewailing opportunities lost in the past," continued Doris. "Well, not contented with such remarkable success in her undertakings, she has now started operations on a good, kind, little crumpled-up Dean. Woe to any male within a three-yard radius

of her beguiling eye! A man I know, a merry excellent idiot—but that is a secret——”

“Doris, my dear,” interrupted someone, “you are incorrigible—half mad; a living sentence of the court of heredity.”

“The only attraction about our friend here, that I can see, is his bristly shaved face, which might be very useful to strike one’s matches upon. But he has always struck me as being a sort of life-like blacking-brush; on his head he has a little hair which goes a long way. His celibacy is a grievance to her, as it is to many of the country matrons about here, all unbeautiful, I may mention, with complexions like mine, the leather of old tan boots, and all bulged out with flannel petticoats. By the way, if women are stuffed out with anything, it should be bank-notes.

“Oh, are you not tired of my rigmarole, you quiet creatures? Have a cigarette?” she continued, three minutes later, staring at some shocked faces. “Well, dear Lady Vi would rather get into society than Heaven—er—both equally difficult for her. But she has occupied her time since her return collecting acquaintances, just like children collect beads or marbles, some of them shady. She has few friends, hundreds and thousands of these acquaintances who swarm to her house like a marvellous living stream, a great sea. Society at her country house is calculated to stagger the courts of Europe, her title being an effective magnet for the attraction of snobs.

“Curious, isn’t it?—in these days, too, when they are to be bought and caught so easily. A pernicious habit. The latest attraction to her collection is a rich American woman, wife of a millionaire in a small way of business—cheap scent, which she is discreet enough not to use. This lady describes her husband as a steadfast rock of ages; another husband no one has yet seen; I suppose he’ll drop from heaven

one day sudden like. What funny things she says. You are bound to meet her if you know Lady Vi; she has given her quarters in her house. She is a woman who, like Lady Vi, spends her whole life thinking out frocks—clothes!

“Her only books, a woman’s looks,
As seen in her own mirror.

“She goes to a place abroad once a year, spends six months for the health of her hair, ‘It needs rest, my dear,’ she will tell you, in a sepulchral devotional voice. They travel with a secretary and two barbers. As well as this, she makes quite exciting inroads into polite conversation, and plays the piano with every part of her body except her fingers. Remind me, Valerie, to repeat one of her latest when we are alone. Ah! but such is fame and unlimited credit in the Rue de la Paix! You should see with what scorn she gazes upon my unmaided hair. Well! Lady Vi, when she receives, goes in for crowds. Funnier than the Palace Theatre; cheap scent, causing quite a great tidal wave in social amenity; knights’ wives talking about ‘my carriage,’ and ‘my good John’—who rose to be Lord Mayor, living ‘midst crests, electric bells, and constant relays of expensive food. It is a mystery why Lady Mary asked Lady Vi here; but no doubt we shall learn the reason later. It is not unlike Lady Ambrose to invite the wrong people. I come—Lucius, you are impertinent; I am not one of the—Oh! but there! I am sure this is an odd party; there is among us a new peer—but not as new as he was five years ago. I fancy our dear generous hostess has a little over-stepped the bounds in her choice of original characters this time. Money is a credential for virtue and a good name, London takes the millionaire to its innocent and gushing heart. ‘Blessed is the man who has credit’—for he might

some day float a Company—which would enable him to pay bills.”

“But here we are all chosen for our originality, and we must endeavour to keep up our reputations,” said Doris’s companion, a tall man.

“What an idea!”

They all smiled.

After sipping some tea, the girl spoke again.

“Now, there is the Dean! because he is noted for innocence and simplicity, my one ambition is to shock him. ‘My dear Lady Vi,’ I heard him say as I passed, ‘I absolutely refuse to become a Benedick. You really wish to take possession of me, as you would your family doctor.’ Then he groaned piteously. Poor little crumpled-up, untidy Dean, when will you learn that a little widow is a dangerous thing? I felt inclined to sing out and take his part: ‘Not the family doctor, sweet Vi, but in the same way that you took possession of your Prince, and little soldier baronet.’”

“Doris,” said Lucius Macnamary, “I am afraid your wonderful imagination runs away with you. He would have looked aghast, had you interrupted their *tête-à-tête*. That was only his way of coquetting. Believe me, he likes it; she will marry him if she has set her mind on it. A mere man, much less an ecclesiastic, with monastic ignorance of worldly women, is no match for a designing one of Lady Vi’s type.”

“But speaking of mistakes,” said Mrs Trelawney, “London Society is so vast and so comprehensive that cards are not unfrequently left by irreproachable dowagers on the most notorious of last season’s divorcees. Widows are invited to dinner with their husbands, and married men to dances without their wives, like married bachelors.”

“Well, the reason I did not interrupt them was, because of my mud-stained skirt,” said Doris. “See-

ing he has been also a bachelor, that is, a hermit for years, interested in no frocks of later date than Queen Elizabeth's, my short tweed shooting rig-out would assuredly have shocked him. But talking of the originality of our party, let us be thankful that it is not the sort of house-party at which, as the guests come in, the plate goes on. It was most lavishly done at that sort of very exclusive house-party lately, given expressly for royalty. But on the night of the ball, all the real gold family plate went out as security to the money-lender."

"Are you serious, Doris?"

"It is a fact. You know where it was, Valerie, don't you?"

"Who was the hermit in the hut?" said that woman by way of changing the subject. "Let us hear more of him?"

"Oh, he is coming to dine, so you will see him, a very up-to-date, or, rather, up-to-morrow young man. How to describe him? A remarkable creature, who stared at me with great black eyes in a way that frightened me," answered the girl seriously. "He wears his clothes well; as he passes by the women, he leaves each with a sigh or broken heart. He is a man who always forgets there are others. His loquacity is equal to my own, and if Lady Ambrose should design that he takes me in to dinner, well——"

Doris's speech was interrupted just then by a tall, majestic-looking woman entering the room.

"Dearest Countess, where have you been? We have missed you," said Valerie Trelawney, passing her hand into her arm and drawing her to the sofa.

The lady's entry was almost immediately followed by that of Lady Vi and the Dean. Then the hostess returned, emanating at once an atmosphere of pleasant chatter, a slightly-built woman with a clever and very kind face, not the usual, unbending expressionless English matron, who fills her house

with conventional, monosyllabic girls. Doris said "she was one who had the genius for entertaining, which is not acquired but inborn. She was neither beautiful nor young, but she had the subtle quality of making you feel at home—the one guest—and impressed this on everyone; not like the usual London hostess, who accepts your hand like a slice of cold fish, from which you are just saved by an introduction to another shipwrecked mariner."

"Ah!" said the hostess, going towards Mr Macnamary, Valerie, and the Countess, "I caught Lucius on the eve of flight abroad. You are my two best friends—one my brother, the other my sister. It is strange you have never met before. I wish——"

But her voice was drowned by sudden chattering.

From outside came motor maniacs in goggles, edged with rabbit fur, not to be distinguished from polar bears or big poodle-dogs, jabbering with a sort of whisky-and-soda brilliancy their auto language, consisting of the "three P.'s"—"puncture," "police about," and "petrol," combined with stories of how they had performed their morning's duty as motorists, breaking records, finding life too long to treat as an Art, worshipping one God only, the God of Speed, describing the persons they had run over and killed, the inevitable rock they had dashed themselves against, and lastly, but not least, the vagrant steam-roller, run into and left in a state of hysterics by their latest new and noisy 2000-guinea toy, which they found much more effective, with brass fittings, as an advertisement than newspaper columns. All mad with the present outbreak of automobilism, intent on completely annihilating time and space. Nearly the whole of the party seemed to flock in from the windows and various entrances, very few of them with any loose cash, as they were fined about ten times a week. Quite a coterie of beautiful women, coiffured like dolls, all full of life and good-humour.

Some married, clever, old, young, all well dressed. Some widows, others who wished they were; many divorced—others who wished they were, and some who ought to have been. Also, many other "smart" persons who enjoyed all the advantages of wealth, without having any money, their men with them, sketchy figures in black, tweed, and white—diplomats, gamblers, men of the sporting fraternity, bringing with them an atmosphere of jollity and manliness, and a few real old theory-mongers looking as if they needed flesh food. There were some other creatures whom one would hardly describe as men, very lady-like young social confections of the present day, of the "pink tea" type, talking the usual society jargon combined with the gesticulations of the chimpanzee; one or two who had been sent to Paris to study Art, but had promptly studied dissipation in all its forms instead. All perfectly outfitted, even ornamental one or two, Debretted and Burked, of course, and surrounded by the usual worshipful ladies; some girls and women, who lived more in friends' houses than their own—positively living "on the road," making their own houses, or so-called homes, a sort of cloak-room, only to store their luggage, or keep their children. Some men of the impecunious, "asked everywhere," type, who strike terror to the heart of prudent mothers, patronised by the hostesses who affect them, and who give the "debutante" what is known as a "thin time." Some of the guests sat by the windows, in corners, or stood in groups in the middle of the room, chatting briskly. In a few moments it was difficult for anyone to hear his own voice, or more than snatches of the conversation of the others.

"What I like about Lucius is, that he is so lamentably modest. He calls his lovely yacht a little insignificant tub—a mere toy. Now, nothing in this world needs so much reforming as other people's

habits. The wickedness of London appals me, yet I am no paragon. And I think——”

“Ecclesiasticism in the twentieth century is loosening its grasp on the consciences of men and——,” the good, little Dean was trying to say, but his voice was stifled by another of Doris’s high-pitched remarks.

“You see, we are rising higher. Oh, we are human bullets, shot about from place to place, or house to house. Yes, we rush about so much nowadays, we can grasp nothing. A rolling stone gathers no moss, mamma tells me, but I’m not keen on moss or cobwebs; they’re not remunerative, only fit for ruins. Indeed, we are all more like steam-engines dragged about by other steam-engines, or miniature motor cars, in frock-coats and petticoats, are we not? One minute we are rich, another poor; but, thank goodness! it is recognised now among us—that none is at the bottom of the social ladder until he becomes a sandwich man.”

“Now, you are a literary epicure,” one incomparably lamblike little woman near Doris was saying to a silent, grave man. “Tell me how, oh, how! I can become a popular authoress.”

“Prepare a good substantial meal for the hungry, full of sugary sentiment,” he returned, with a curious expression on his face.

“But I don’t understand.”

“Don’t you? Well, give them fireworks. Plenty of ‘love’ in corners. Don’t leave much to the imagination. Bring it all down on your readers like a sledge-hammer. Serve hot between brilliant covers with a clamour of trumpets, and then add a few libel actions.”

“Thanks, ever so much. Can you give me more hints?”

“Well, know what you want to say, and—never say it; never use your own language. Stick in as many

fine passages as you can wholesale; a long word is much better than a short one. Lastly, do not fail to belong to a 'Mutual Admiration Club,' a 'Talk-ee, talk-ee Club.' Like any more hints?"

"Thanks again; then the style?"

"Oh! you needn't bother about style; it is a key to the artificial. Be for once yourself, that is the most perfect style." He was in this serious. "Imitate the sixpenny telegram," he went on again, laughing now; "it's the newest thing in style. It's of the newest school in its breeziest form. I am sure I have never personally felt any of the poet's ecstasy regarding moon, stars, etc. I think too much romance and scent of roses sometimes brings certain people out in rash—although I am unfortunately a poet by trade; but on the whole, books should never be written. It's much better to leave the pen and ink, and take to the pickaxe or spade. It is the same as in the days before the profession had shaken off vices generated in Grub Street. Oh, if you could only know the dignity of a publisher or an editor, when he comes face to face with a contributor who hath no other qualification than a pressing need for remuneration."

"Doris, I like your simile about the miniature motors in frock-coats and petticoats; it was a particularly poetical description for motor maniacs," Lucius Macnamary said, having heard her previous remark across the room. This was between a slight lull of the voices.

"Think so? Don't see anything poetical about it myself," laughed the girl. "I'm a practical girl, given to calling a spade a spade. Sarcasm slides off me, Lucius. I'm of the motor-car type, I think. Some prefer motor cars, you know; some, poetic similes and simpers—er—and some——"

"Petticoats, Mr Macnamary," said the quiet, literary man from his corner.

"My dear fellow," protested Lucius, "I think you must be really getting ripe for eternity, or your state of mind is perhaps due to dyspepsia; which is it?"

Doris rose and stood before the author. For mere impressions of strange-coloured exotic scenes, he had not his equal in the world. She knew perfectly well that he was desperately in love with her, in spite of her utter disregard of her appearance. She held her cup of tea in one hand; in the other a *foie-gras* sandwich, at which she munched at intervals.

"I have always had an ardent desire to become a member of your 'Great Vagrant Brotherhood.' I am particularly struck with your brilliancy, Mr Author, since you broke new ground in your studies of American marriages. Indeed, I have long suspected some latent originality in you; your remark was like some old gentlemen I know—'bald.' It is fortunate I am not of this century, but the next, or the twenty-third. I am sure, now, that you would make a nice companion for my gouty days, and a husband, after all, seems to me a very useful quality to finance one's occasional lapses from grace."

"Is not that a fact I have been trying with British pertinacity for so long to impress upon you?" whispered the man, a whisper shielded by another sudden burst of loud chatter.

"Yes, curiously enough, you remind me—please take my cup a moment—of a very dear, old uncle of mamma's. He was a bishop, and had a face like a Roman-nosed cab-horse: I never see a bishop even now without collapse. He invariably took his little annual trip abroad to a very gay French sea-side; attraction—the bathing. His first remark was always a paradox, 'Porter, direct me to the spot where the Parisian ladies wet their toes in so much over-dressed undress,'—the contemplation of Nature is such a sweet pastime. Yes, you remind me so

much of a picture we have of him at home ; he has the same oppressively pious expression of innocence—my tea again ? Thanks awfully ! Hope you are not tired of holding it. Yes, mamma's old centenarian uncle, but, of course, I must not forget to tell you this expression was reserved for photographs and the public. He threw this off when in the 'buzzum' of his family. 'Yes, yes,' he would say to his wife, who, by the way, was exceedingly ritualistic, 'although I am a high dignitary in the Church, I am in all my ideas exceedingly low, and an advocate, madam, for real liberty of thought and action ; it's ridiculous to think of harnessing a man's thoughts.' ”

Then a pretty little woman, wearing a hat of sun-kissed straw and cherries, who was standing near began to talk about the weather and the shooting. “It is only necessary to see the number of hares to be satisfied at once on what terms an owner is with his tenants and neighbours,” she said.

A few moments later Louis Volvois whispered something in Doris's ear. She flushed a little, and then, trusting to the increased chatter for her remarks to be unheard, remarked :

“Louis, you are ridiculous ! What is the use of the love you profess?—it seems to have no palpable effect. You don't eat less ; oh, I can't tolerate a man who pretends to be in love, and yet, in spite of his emotions, continues to be hungry ! Then you sleep, don't you?—you continue to sleep soundly ? Yes, I thought so ! I don't call that love ; but it's the sort of thing you would expect of a hungry man. Then you talk and laugh in just your usual way, and all the time you pretend to be in love with me. Oh, it's sickening ! I've no patience with you. Now, I'm quite sure you will have another sandwich ; go and get one, lazy man ! ”

Louis Volvois continued to whisper, his face un-

changed, quiet and calm. Those around watching his face supposed he was making the most casual of remarks.

"Bah! I want fire—the love you can see in the eyes and hear in the voice. You Saxons, you fair Englishmen, you have no fire. Ah!" she added, "and don't forget, the main qualification of the ideal husband now is—entire absence of brains, and a big banking account."

"We have persuaded Lady Ambrose to wear that curious ruby heirloom, and she has promised to show us some of the others of which we have heard much," a woman said to Valerie Trelawney, who started and coloured slightly.

"Louis," continued Doris, "marriages are off—you know that as well as I do. No money, no marriage! or she living under the stony parental roof, he starving! handfuls of rice, silver salt-cellar, wedding bells; but after!—just as unromantic as the workhouse! How many times more am I to tell you that in these days you cannot combine 'literature' with 'matrimony'? You writers are better by yourselves if you would only believe me before too late. Transient flirtations are better suited to you than large families. In the meantime let your ink flow in floods, accompanied by your mouldy tears. But I suppose, you would say your sort of marriages are better than nothing. For anything is better than the sad experience of a dear girl friend of mine who has long loved and flirted with little Lord Oxtail, but hopelessly, because she was not previously married.

"You make excellent 'copy'; but, once again, inability to write anything but cheques is quite the smartest thing here," she added.

The Countess, speaking to Valerie, suggested holding a small spiritualistic séance. She was very interested in all such subjects, so much so, that it was not an unusual thing to come upon her suddenly

and find her holding a discussion with some invisible personality.

"I have as much strength of mind as, I am sure, a Commissioner in Lunacy, dear Countess," said Valerie, "but really I am frightened at such things. Will you not postpone the Séance?"

"We will arrange an evening later, dear, but I have a distinct impression at this moment that a dear departed friend is trying to get into communication with me. There is, however, some obstacle I am sure a little Séance would remove. It may be a matter of great importance."

"I should say the friend was all the dearer for being departed," whispered Lucius Macnamary, who was not a believer in Spiritualism, but had known the Countess for years.

"I met another friend of yours, Madame C——, last year in America. I consider her craze on the subject nothing short of madness, if you will forgive me for saying so," he said. "Thomas Gales Forster was the grand old veteran of Spiritualism, I believe, was he not?"

"Ah! Madame C—— was my oldest friend. She knows more of my wonderful life-history than any person in the world, except the papers: of course they know more than I do myself. But of my destiny!—yet what of that, dear Lucius? It's folly, is it not? to ever look back, or expect anything of life! Alas! we must all see sooner or later that Romance has but a fortuitous link with Reality."

But, as usual, this daughter-in-law of a ducal family of France, began to dream again of early days when she was a star in the social orbit of the Faubourg Saint Germain. The soft lights became to her the girandoles of the rooms—the great ballroom of the Tuileries. She saw again the pictures of her husband's ancestors—sphinx heads adorned with periwigs of the reign of Louis le Grand—exquisite

Watteaus, Bouchers set in panelling; felt again the trenchant colours, the perfume of tobacco and tea, and the hundreds of roses intoxicatingly loading the atmosphere with delicious scents.

Lucius Macnamary recognised that he had made an unhappy remark; it had raised memories of the past again in the mind of this sensitive lady. Before he could change the subject she continued in her dreamy way:

"Ah! the day of Love, dear Lucius, like the real day of Christ, has only just begun to dawn. You have reminded me of a very bitter past—my awful marriage. But when wise minds are brought to bear upon the institution, there is a grand future in store for marriage—a future better than the present. My husband was of noble family; all told me I was fortunate. They married me—I was seventeen; it ended in a tragedy that filled the mouths of all Europe. The next year I met my fate—he loved me; my husband shot him in a duel, and then shot himself."

The Countess looked over their heads as if in deep thought. They were at a loss how to break the silence that followed, when curiously a spasm of laughter was heard from the other end of the room, and another wild remark from Doris.

She was now entertaining three men in addition to her author, succeeding in keeping them in constant fits of laughter.

The Dean had escaped from Lady Vi's side at last; she had gone towards Doris's merry little group.

"You, Valerie," continued the Countess, "your husband was immensely rich; you were a silly, unthinking girl of seventeen, too. You are now the most disillusioned woman I know, but you appear to be both strangely unsuited to each other. Thank God! the world is changing; men and women are

evolving into higher, nobler creatures, and not bound so much by the cast-iron laws of convention."

"Yes, dear Lady Vi," Doris was heard to say in a high-pitched voice, "I am sure he will make you a nice mechanical husband. Just the thing most needed in these days, useful for signing cheques and things, don't you know? and travelling; a very useful sort of silk-velvet leaning-post—" She was looking at the Dean, who was coming towards them again. "Perfection, of course, is too much to expect, dear," she added.

"Why, Countess! you know me so little in spite of our friendship. I am the most cheery person alive," exclaimed Valerie; "I never think under any circumstances, and as for the past—well, when I am ninety, perhaps. It is the greatest folly. Believe me, a woman must be in her sphere to cheer, laugh, sing, but never think—at least not of the past, and those dangerous, ridiculous 'might-have-beens'."

"Countess Eulalia, I hear you will hold a Séance one evening," said Doris. "I want to tell you my experiences. Sometimes when I close my eyes to sleep, I see pictures and have curious impressions of what is to happen in the future. Invariably in two or three days—some times a week—it happens. I want your advice about it, because it frightens me. I am sure one requires the nerve of a matron of a hospital to think of such weird things."

"My dear child," answered the Countess, "I suspect you have some clairvoyant second-sight powers of which you are scarcely aware. Some women possess this more strongly than others. No one dreams of disputing the fact that a woman's instinct is worth more than a week of man's argument, yet it is difficult to persuade a man of science into belief in these valuable faculties."

The drawing-room had now become like a chattering parrot-house, and there was an increase of noise

and buzz. The host walked in and sat by Valerie. He was a quiet unobtrusive member of Parliament. The buzz went on for a quarter of an hour longer, when there was a general dispersal, and the room was left empty.

"We are all very *raide gauche*, I'll own."

"We are all—well, perhaps—er a little immoral, —that is, fashionably immoral, which is often only pretence, just because we imagine it is 'smart.' We are all dressmakers' models on which they hang their clothes; mere models for their *chef-d'œuvres* for breakfasts, luncheons, teas, dinners, and in bed even. But for all that—let me whisper it, dear—in spite of our ape-like mimicry of fashions, I consider that we are all a cut above Lady Violet—I mean, that is, of course, as regards our fashionable pretended immorality."

"She has most queer ideas. Has she not?"

This was Doris, of course.

But her audacity was checked by the Countess. She had been whispering her confidences in Valerie's ear as they all three stood in the doorway of the Countess's rooms ten minutes later.

"Now, for downright flat-footed obtuseness, oh, Countess, would you, or would you not, call Louis Volvois dull? When will men learn that to anyone of my temperament, the more I love, the more snubbing *must* follow—just to pretend, of course, I don't. And why is it, that all nice authors keep their decorative thoughts for their novels? Epigrams have gone out of fashion, and only gambling come in. Bridge has passed into a West-end cure. Clever talk is only for the stage and novels, and not admitted in Society, especially here, I know! But, oh, dear me! he is so very silent sometimes. It puzzles me. Oh! By the way, how do you like the very latest gambling 'jargon' that I am cultivating?"

Exactly five minutes later Valerie Trelawney was dressing in the pretty bedroom of pure white and silver, studded and ornamented with coral, allotted to her, and facing the Dutch garden. Her maid was altering the twist of her lovely golden-red coils; her thoughts were following each other in rapid sequence.

"I have found men so easy, but this man, Lucius Macnamary, is a curious man. Umph! a difficult man," she laughed softly, and then said aloud:

"I will not wear that dress, Suzanne. Bring me the white tulle *bouillonne*, with sleeves caught with the rose-velvet bows of Louis the Fifteenth design."

She smiled again. Even to-day in every woman's heart is still that dangerous irresistible desire of conquest.

"But—wait a little. 'Il en est d'un homme qui aime comme d'un moineau, pris à la glu, plus il se débat, plus il s'embarrasse.' And as regards myself, at that particular stage of a love-affair when I know I have conquered, I say, in the words of Henry the Eighth, 'I love him not, or fear him'; there's my creed! That should always have been the creed of all women, and what ages of untold misery would have been spared! I am afraid I am in my ideas much the other side of the Atlantic as regards man. Of course it is only English women who cherish misery. American and all foreign women are more sensible. They break hearts, then use them. Of course, I must amuse myself, married or unmarried. One is absolutely obliged to do that nowadays when paying a visit to a country house. It is only kindness to the hostess to amuse oneself and her guests, to decrease her responsibility. So away, baby-good resolutions!"

At that moment a strange thing happened—at least, strange to her. While she was continuing dressing automatically, as if her brain and sight were playing her a trick, in a flash of light which seemed to illu-

minate her mental sight she distinctly saw the form of Lucius Macnamary looking at her with eyes like vivid search-lights.

She saw with her mental spiritual sight a tall, broad, serious man, his face lighted up with flashes of fun, one whose smile was quite indescribable, entirely fascinating, but so rare!

Distinctly she heard his voice saying somewhat scornfully:—

“A lovely woman is Valerie Trelawney. Ah! but one to describe as ‘la femme incomprise.’”

It was only a fleeting impression; then other thoughts over which she had control followed in rapid sequence, and she saw the room again in which she was dressing. “How odd!” she said, half angrily. “Is it possible anyone thinks this of me? But how absurd, merely a trick of my brain; my sight must be defective.”

At last she succeeded in dismissing the troublesome thought of it from her mind. Yet it was, strangely enough, from this moment in her life, although unaware of it herself, began her first serious self-analysis.

Exactly at that moment Lucius Macnamary stood also in his room.

“She seems to have chased the gloom from my soul,” was his thought. He was looking out of the window. “I think she is a woman who would have understood me.” The picture of Valerie seemed to have wrought itself into his brain too, and yet he was a man who prided himself he was of stony immobility.

“What a lovely woman is Valerie Trelawney! Ah, but one to describe as ‘la femme incomprise.’”

He was about to turn and commence his dressing when a curious thing occurred also to him. Words came to his mind, but as if spoken by the voice of

the woman of whom he was so deeply thinking. "I have found men so easy."

Lucius stood upright and looked about the room.

"Pooh!—my brain is playing tricks with me."

The next moment, again as distinctly as a telephonic message, the words pronounced with clearness and emphasis, the same voice said to him:—"Il en est d'un homme qui aime comme d'un moineau, pris à la glu, plus il se débat, plus il s'embarrasse."

This time he was genuinely startled.

"Good Heavens!—is my brain failing? No, I am a man of reason, of science. No, this is distinctly a very interesting case of telepathy."

A delightful smile passed over the countenance of this slow and cautious man. "As a sparrow caught in bird-lime!—the more he struggles, the more he is entangled."

Then he laughed outright as he had not done for years, and going towards his mirror began to brush his hair. "I'm the sparrow!—how lovely!" and he sat down with his brush in his hand. "I've a positive assurance that this is another proof of that at present indefinite, illusive, unrecognised force of nature—thought transference from one mind to the other," he said eventually.

And he had realised the truth. But of what that curious complexity signified, Valerie Trelawney had no idea.

Messages by wire, telephone, mail, mere mechanical contrivances, as sent by the whole world to-day, will soon be recognised as messages forwarded in the rudest fashion, compared with those sent from mind to mind, from soul to soul, without material mediums.

Psychology is hardly yet born.

House-parties are the most delightful inventions of the social mind. This is a fact few people will be at pains to dispute. Yet so inconsistent is the brain

of the "British Public" that it is often stupid enough to express surprise when, from the regular study of its dear good newspapers it notices "divorce proceedings" decidedly on the increase. The "good B.P." has a tremendous appetite for its newspapers—it would not be without them for the world; yet house-parties it sneers at as the wicked inventions of naughty, frivolous, giddy Society. This is rather stupid, for house-party records are useful, and are simply the preliminary chapters of newspaper romances. If it likes the one, it must close its good eyes upon the other. Indeed the dear "British Public" should bow its head with Gratitude. No house-parties!—no newspaper Romances. No house-parties—no flirtations, no engagements, no marriages, no love, no comedy, no tragedy, no disgrace, and, sometimes, no Death!

CHAPTER III

THE GUESTS OF THE HOUSE-PARTY

"Man is a ray or reflection of the Infinite Mind. The most powerful telescope known to man is the Mind's Eye."

"Diversité, c'est ma devise."—LA FONTAINE.

THE Hon. Lucius Macnamary had at one time been a man of politics. He was now a human "enigma," yet in spite of all his faults and weaknesses one of whom to say, "*Voilà un homme!*" A true artist, and a humanist. Sometimes, too, his pessimism was singularly depressing with a certain reserve, even a *gaucherie*, but he was very rich, so people overlooked this tendency to revel in his own and the world's woes. He had extraordinary political sagacity, the liberty and daring of thought of a Frenchman—but without a Frenchman's exuberance of action; his character was at present like an unhewn stone, yet occasionally his talk was full of caustic comment and bright epigram, that flashed and sparkled like a shining blade. Once, when he was very young and not so rich, he had even gone so far as to write an anæmic novel. He then felt acutely Ireland's social wrongs, and had tried to utter her plaintive note of sadness. He had called it "The World's Sorrow." Whether it was owing to the "lively" title, or the way he had been "slaughtered," is impossible to tell, but he had never written another, and he repeatedly said, "I never really knew myself until I wrote a

book; and then the newspapers, never having seen me, described me in their own way. I was melancholy, I was a pessimist of the Schopenhauer or Hartmann type, I was long-suffering, and a hundred other things. As a matter of fact, I was just twenty. But as a result of the careful study of all these newspapers, I eventually became all they said of me—I think it so impressed my mind. This was my first and only excursion into literary controversy, and I then made a vow to reserve my effusions and political convictions until the day when the Press would be ‘more lamblike.’” He often said now, good-humouredly, indeed, he was a world-weary, cynical man, full of peculiarities of temperament, living in isolation on the intellectual plane. Giddy rattle-pate Doris, had laughingly christened him once “The modern Married Bachelor,” and her careless remark had clung to him among his special friends, and struck a note of truth, while he retaliated by calling her the “Bachelor Girl!”

But to really know him, it was as well to see every side of his character. To see him occasionally following the current of “Life’s” attractions, when he cast aside all care and joined all his bachelor friends of lesser ideals, and travelled with them. And he had modern accomplishments, they all said of him, perhaps teasingly, not the least of them being—so his jovial companions said—a tolerable skill in the fashionable art of love-making at a moment’s notice, and a faculty for consoling all young married women somewhat dissatisfied with their own good but dull husbands, buzzing bee-wise from flower to flower. How can mind solve mind? Mind is the greatest, most fertile source of complex perplexities. In the midst of a circle of these his best beloved friends, once a year, at an hotel at Cairo, for instance, taking his innocent sip through straw, surrounded by only bachelor men friends, there was a

totally different expression on his usually stern face. Occasionally in these moods he became positively light-hearted again and boyish.

This was what his men friends called seeing the "bachelor side" of the man, and they delighted in Doris's teasing definition "the married bachelor," for he even to them was a puzzling duality. Watching and knowing this tired, world-weary individual in England, it became easy to believe that man possesses two distinct personalities, or many, for he seemed truly a different creature. Sadly one wondered why sometimes Modern Marriage and conventionalities made such a difference to the expression of the countenance, when it should only make for great happiness. But merely intellectual people are as variable as barometers. On the Continent, in London, at his clubs, he was now and then the embodiment of happiness; but whenever surrounded by his very energetic, ambitious, American wife, his *blasé* young step-sons, and extremely strait-laced, pious, "Churchy" step-daughter, the happy light in his eyes died out. His face then appeared to be that of a grave, over-burdened man quite thirty years older, a difficult face to describe, depending solely upon its expression of irony, sometimes of enormous kindness and good-heartedness. His tastes, tempers, manias, were decidedly British (unfortunately it was discovered too late), in direct opposition to his wife's—which was piteous, seeing they were tied together in the bonds of present-day matrimony, which is the only institution which we do not change and improve with the centuries. It is the only thing that stops still.

Years ago, when he was a very young man, he had been somehow most curiously influenced into this marriage by his stern old father (who brought him up on copy-book maxims in the fear of the Lord, and a thick stick), for some absurd family reasons, and of

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course inveigled into it by his wife, then a rich widow very well skilled through her mother in the subtle art—as most women are who are properly brought up by their mammas! of inveigling men into matrimony, practising every deceit possible to blind them as to character. Indeed, he had actually been wheedled into it, as so many men are, and after marriage had been introduced to her six children, who had been away in school in America out of sight, and to his wife in an entirely new character. He looked back upon it now as youth's folly—one of youth's inevitable sad mistakes. To-day he was a disillusioned, irritable man, with many wrong ideals; but even mistaken ideals are better than none at all, or always solid indifference, and with it material contentment, which seeks no solution of life's problems, and goes back, instead of improving and progressing.

The Law of Nature which governs temperaments and our relations with each other, touches one of the fundamental basic foundation-stones of nature, and the person who teaches this lesson will be the saviour of his race, and will make hospitals unnecessary. "Marriage is, no doubt, a very excellent arrangement for spinster ladies with heaps of money, and for very elderly gouty men without any, or for impoverished members of the aristocracy," Lucius Macnamary had lately remarked laughingly. "Indeed, it seems to me those sort of marriages are the only really successful ones." He went on his way now, to bachelor haunts, striving to appear tranquil, calm, resigned, but inclining each year to solitude, to the mystic and ascetic.

"Ah! what matters anything in man's short-lived day?" he would ejaculate, occasionally after a burst of irritability, viewing the future despondently, as if he had nothing to give or to expect of life, looking upon it as a whole, pitying all enthusiasm, aspiration, emotion, or anything verging upon Romance and illusion. However, again among his congenial, well-

chosen few bachelor friends, sometimes in one of those quick flashes of humour which belonged to the man, his wit that had no sting, one saw his heart, saw, in spite of the bitter disenchantment for everything—his pessimism, his outer appearance of resignation—that he longed for an ideal life, lived in his own way after the model of his inward thought, which now he never hoped to live. Certain temperaments are suited to each other, while others are totally unfitted. This Law is the pedestal of happiness or misery.

As regards his wife, she had been a very rich American widow, her mother a great friend of his father's, hence the arrangement he had foolishly entered into without proper consideration. It is far too common to marry for convenience. When mankind is educated to understand Nature's Laws of temperaments, such marriages will be considered criminal against community and nation, and heredity will be a thought to speak with silent breath.

This is the outward impression of the woman: Of medium height, and now very stout, with a red face which spoke of great determination, and blue steely eyes. In her youth she had been intensely ambitious, determined at all costs to gain for herself excessive wealth and every possible worldly advantage and position. How she got it did not matter, or whom she crushed down by deceit, lies, and cruelly false impressions of others on her way. Of course, she had been carefully brought up to this as a profession, and to look upon marriage as the one and only profession or means for a woman to gain material benefits, and man, simply a more or less agreeable bait and stepping-stone. She was indeed a worldly-wise, practical woman, who scorned ideals and aspirations. Except that she had lately taken up music—that is, as she understood it—and had gone near to turning herself into a musical instrument—(a violin in constant

motion, accompanied by her shrill soprano)—after her marriage she had given herself up to all the material comforts of the lower-sense nature and the luxuries of life. To her the blessed state of marriage was a goal which brought woman almost to a standstill—that is—as regards a certain line of so-called progression particularly belonging to the average woman, who spends her youth according to the old-fashioned habit, cultivating only the outward physical attractions; all that added to the outward appearance, external polish, fascination; all the well-known feminine arts, trickery, deceits, of appealing for her own ends to the lower nature of man; wearing her femininity to draw him into her net as a cloak to deceive and to please, thus gaining ambitious ends as early as possible at his expense and consequent degradation. An education which fits woman to struggle with others and profit surreptitiously and plausibly at others' expense. But having captivated the eligible male, then of course she usually casts off all these well-known subtle disguises. The external is dominated then by the real character of the inner woman. Then man and woman know each other as they are. Once entering the state of matrimony—which to all such people is a very material lessening stage indeed—the true character of this woman stood out clear, with all its selfishness, her greed of gain for self and only self, and her dead husband's children, and soon plainly to be read by the quiet, deep-thinking man who was her husband. A timely knowledge of the fundamental principles of heredity will save many human beings from a living death and a premature grave. He knew he was in her eyes to be merely the stepping-stone for the advancement of her plans and ambitions for them. From that date she had given herself up to Society's social pleasures, and luxurious mode of existence, trying to impose her will and

thought upon him on every occasion, growing careless of her appearance, thinking it unnecessary to waste time to please and attract him any more, and unfortunately age came to her in layers of fat. Each year she grew more uninteresting and coarse in his eyes, full of longings for self-gratification, material enjoyments, and the luxury of living struggling in the coils of the ignorance of the outer world and its customs. She consequently looked years older than her age, while he seemed somehow to grow younger in spirit, more intellectual, disgusted with material pleasures and the unsatisfying things of this visible world. We are looking for someone still brave enough to overcome prudish condemnation, and wise enough to look forward to the improvement of the race through the law of heredity, in which are found the underlying principles of either the suffering or happiness of mankind. Knowledge is purity, where the soul is searching for truth. Her own children, her household domesticity, with all its dulness, her wonderful superfluous plans she thought urgently necessary for comfort and luxury, or else to create impressions upon Society, occupied the rest of her time. Her husband had to take with her a secondary place. He had married thinking to find a companion, a comrade, but had been bitterly disappointed. For a few very short weeks, he had said "*Oui! je l'aime.*" She had been his *camarade*, his confidant, but only for a few weeks, until his eyes were opened to her true character. So he gradually developed a solitary nature, and then invariably found his house filled with chattering American women. It had now grown a habit to her to ignore his wishes in every way. Each year she seemed to increase her own and his expenditure and responsibility. Thus they journeyed on, she going her way of life, he another; yet both joined together by that legal bond which is still supposed to make two people "one"

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—that union of the outer flesh and blood personalities, the unreal reflections, those lower fleeting shadows of our real inner selves, tied and chained together in the lower world, unsuited, daily becoming more aggravatedly so. Oh! for the solution.

Like half the world to-day, these two people had been deceived by these outer unreal personalities, and were as far from the true understanding of life and each other—by which all becomes harmony instead of discord—as babies would be seeking for a solution to one of life's gravest problems. We await now improvement, we await progress in this as in all other institutions; we wait also for the extinction of separateness, of discord, and a quicker operation of the Law, which is a bringer of rhythmic sweetness and harmony into all phases of life. "Souls," Lucius often thought, when pondering hard in his study upon the great question of marriage, "seem to be most superfluous in these days, in fact, most inadvisable additions to our ordinary marriage contracts." It was sad that at present he was still so blinded by separateness. But we all have our various stages of progress, and nothing brings so much confusion as the imposing of the experience of others upon individual souls, until their own time arrives. We arrive at points in our progression as trains arrive at their station in due time and order. We, everyone, have our own lessons to learn, so that we shall eventually cast off human weaknesses, and shall all learn to be laws to ourselves.

This is the man and the woman—a modern husband and a modern wife—in this, the beginning of the twentieth century. Expressed in the divine idea, the masculine and feminine qualities of existence are, in their union and co-operation, the life and salvation of the world; while in their division and antagonism it is a fruitless life, bringing desolation, destruction and extinguishment.

The Rev. Ignatius Headleigh was an exceptional ecclesiastic of the comic priest order, in whom, apart from his cast-iron conventional ideas, there was an abundance of real goodness, but most of it crushed out of him by the life he had led. He was devoted to dogmas, creeds, outer forms, external ceremonies, and the habitual, conventional thoughts of the World—mixed up with his Christianity—instead of his own reason and conscience, which blind and prevent all originality, progress and development. His was not Christianity, simply, but the Christianity of dogmas, creeds, and churches—two totally distinct religions. Sometimes he would be found laughing boisterously at his own unfathomable jocularities; but when observed, his face would return to the usual solemn expression he thought necessary to his profession—which Doris O'Carroll said was best suited to "compound funerals and marriages," those ceremonies having probably caused it. Of late years he might also truthfully be described as a literary clergyman, for now he devoted nearly all his spare time to literature. He had great talents, but he ever allowed the ideas and customs of others, of convention, to control him, instead of using his own intelligent thought, or of strenuously thinking out things for himself.

But as he was very rich, and his books and manuals of progressive theology had interesting, sensational titles, such as *After Death: A Guide to Heaven, with a Map*, etc., they sold rapidly to hundreds and thousands of females verging on insanity and religious mania. His ideas were crude and materialistic views of great doctrines of modern Christianity, descended from mediævalism, monasticism, mixed up with Protestantism and the Reformation. Indeed, he was steeped in every idea except a scientific one of "Cause and Effect," and, of course, he never realised that his little books were still sharpening the great sword of

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Superstition, Materialism and Dissension. Such men as these mean so well, yet, having experienced no pain, misery, poverty actually for themselves, are sometimes incapable of knowing how to identify themselves with the modern wants and sufferings of men and women, or of meeting class hatreds, dissensions of differing creeds, anarchy, and other social problems, those great realities that underlie false appearances and the outward illusions of the world. They often see men and women as men and women wish to seem, not as they are. But his unique style of religious writing, rich in blameless commonplace, occasionally did good by accident.

He had lately taken up a new departure, "Biographies of departed Church Dignitaries," finding them even more profitable. He had discovered, too, that the real critics, while endeavouring to deal justice and fairness, were absolutely forced to be lenient towards these; for how could any self-respecting critic exercise his scathing wit upon "Biographies of Late Dignitaries," adored by the world? So they had to describe them as "little masterpieces." He was rich enough before, but, of course, had no objection to further wealth; and shut up in his study, week in week out, found it a harmless way of amusing himself. Someone, old-fashioned of course, had suggested that he might have given bread instead of literature to the multitude, seeing he was so rich; but there are always people who will say unkind things, and he did this also, in his own way. At other times, when not shut up in his study, he was fond of Society, that is, he adored being petted by pretty women, which is much the same thing for a man if he happens to be rich. Occasionally he was given to mounting his moral stilts, and liked bringing in with him an atmosphere of "Westminster Abbey," posing as a model of social virtue, and bestowing a sort of tolerant, contemptuous smile

on all creeds different from his own. He invariably tried to talk real, improving conversation, instead of Society's baby-silly babble. Lady Ambrose was such a tactful hostess that whenever she recognised this atmospheric symptom here she insisted upon Valerie Trelawney singing a sweet little ballad of Tschaiowsky's which she loved. One glance, and Valerie always understood, never refusing, singing in her delightful way, with her own peculiarly fascinating utterance of words. He had been very shocked with Louis Volvois' latest novel, its want of conformity to conventional ideas set forth to women. He said he thought the usual nice feminine novel with nice morals at the end much better for women—those old sort in which they were taught to behave to King Man just like pretty mechanical mice. In appearance this gentleman, the Rev. Ignatius Headleigh, was short, fair, with pale yellow hair and a self-satisfied smile. His eyes were green and sometimes brilliant, particularly when in the society of Lady Violet, and, as mentioned before, he adored petting.

Lady Ambrose was a law to herself. Her individuality, originality, and superb qualities were recognised by everyone. In spite of her high position in Society, she constantly defied it, scorning many of its unspoken but domineering dictations, all made strong by nothing, after all, but stupid custom. She followed her own inclinations, without the slightest consideration for the opinion of others. Many women in as high position would have lost their prestige by so boldly striking out new lines in direct opposition to certain conventional rules laid down by the world's grandmothers, their idea of perfect manners. But not so with Lady Ambrose. Her originality was an accepted fact, and people, the few who dared, were beginning to imitate her, parrot-like, which is a characteristic of the fashionable world. They were growing to recognise her as

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a great leader. She never lost prestige, because whatever she did she was always herself. Women, for centuries, have been more or less ruled by others, from babyhood guided and controlled, resting upon others instead of being made to think for themselves, to depend on themselves, and, above all, believe in themselves. "Never destroy a person's belief in herself," said the hostess repeatedly, "for this is the reason of all the misery, all the error of womanhood, and bad preparation for the troubled seas and whirlpools of life. Belief in one's self is the secret of success in everything, for there is no doctrine of such value as that of free will." Yet Lady Ambrose, although striking out a new *rôle* for herself, was never democratic—that is, what is generally supposed to be democracy, much misunderstood, like everything else—although she was sometimes mistaken in a few things.

"I am neither Socialist nor Plutonomist. I can feel sympathy for our good Dean's occasional onslaught on modern life and its absurdities," she once remarked carelessly. She had unrivalled skill, her salons were always delightful, for her guests were chosen, not for the positions they held in the world—high birth, titles, or wealth, as the world chooses to-day—but for *themselves alone*, their intellect, brilliant *causeries*, originality, or the good unexplainable "impression" and atmosphere they each brought with them. Sometimes her house-parties consisted of people who merely amused her. Sometimes merriness, liveliness, youth, high spirits, were passports to her charming house-parties. She often said to her most confidential friends: "It is my chief delight in life never, if possible, to hear said a stupid, tiresome, dull thing. When the world has reached a higher state of development, conversation will possess as great charms as music. Humour will be the instrument, and rippling laughter the exquisite

chords. Ah! there is so little humour nowadays! Why is it so rare?—and how much to be cultivated! It is an indispensable relief in the midst of the present-day calculating mode of living. Harmless frivolity and mirth are qualities as good for the health as sunshine." She was so fond of collecting miscellaneous and interesting people, her want of discrimination sometimes contributed great attraction to her parties. There was a joke against her that once she had gone so far as to invite a popular *danseuse* to meet an eminent bishop.

Her husband, the host, was a quiet, unobtrusive man, with a very kind face, an optimist, who never wanted a better world, or better God than the "Our Father" of his childhood. Doris had once described him as "a study in grey, and lovable seeming-dulness." It was true he had a grey inanimate expression, grey eyes, grey complexion, grey beard, and often wore grey clothes; but at times his face lost its usual mask of dulness and broke into a smile if he heard a really good joke, or a very funny thing happened. But it was only one of the best that succeeded in moving his placid countenance. He was not a good host by any means, but his wife absorbed in herself all the necessary hospitable qualities. Possibly his oversight was owing to this habit of leaving everything to her. It was exactly the same to him if his house contained one hundred people or none; he never changed his own habits or course of life. He read his newspaper for exactly the same length of time every morning, went for the same solitary walk for the sake of exercise and getting up an appetite for his excellent dinners. But for all that, he liked his house full; enjoyed, when he returned from his ramblings, to see his dinner-table surrounded with gay, witty, bright, clever, and even "nonsensical" people. Like his wife, he detested dull people. "Perhaps it is because I am so dull

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myself," he had said. "I am always the most insignificant guest in my own house; of far less importance, and much less observant, than my servants." Occasionally, from such remarks as these, one fancied the "grey" dulness was on the surface, and that underneath that cloak of dryness there might be many a bright spark of wit and humour, only necessary to be enkindled. Once in his life he had become excited, so excited that he raved; but it was only over someone else's wines and chef. His excitement did not last long. Before people had recovered from their astonishment he had cooled down and was discussing the practical interest it would be to Great Britain to have a railway across the Sahara. This was the host.

The twentieth century has set its seal upon the bachelor girl. She no longer regards man as the lord of creation! The seal of this century upon her, is it for better or for worse?

Doris O'Carroll was about twenty-three years of age, and a strikingly original character, known principally for her airy disregard of minute accuracy and all probability. Crude and unfinished, yet still something of a riddle to men, and a riddle worth solving; pretty to look upon, with a fair, boyish, laughing, roguish face, nice blue eyes, soft fair hair, tall and a very good figure, yet no one ever thought of her appearance. They had no time to consider what she looked like, thinking over all the queer things she managed to say. She was just Doris, and nothing else mattered; in spite of all, young and fair, and stamped with the unmistakable hall-mark of the great world. Not like the suburban damosel, in an eternally badly-fitting blouse and short skirt, given over to hockey, and caring nothing for the ugliness of her feet, which she displays so liberally at this unbecoming but healthy game. Doris! full of laughter, frivolity, and the sweet happy-

go-lucky unreasoning of girlhood. Doris! always with her own injudicious blend of doubtfully edifying fun. A magnetic, joyous personality, usually with a banjo slung across her shoulders.

At first sight that day, as she entered the room where Valerie Trelawney and Lucius Macnamary were sitting, she appeared to be anything but an attractive figure. She was clothed in an old-fashioned country girl's dress, a solid, angular bit of coarse material, modelled like a sack, which some people called a skirt—others without a spark of humour in them have been known to go as far as to call this thing a dress, a drapery—and with it a stiff tailor-made coat. Doris had stood before them clothed in this unbecoming fashion, combined with thick-soled, muddy boots, covered with semi-liquid mud stains, a soiled and crumpled shirt, her collar flying open at the neck, a felt hat on one side with a quill in it broken and loose; so the impression can better be imagined than described.

She had a curious, sometimes elaborate way of adorning her person, and any facts she introduced, especially when she took off her gloves, with the manner of skinning a victim. Other acquired sporting mannerisms she had picked up from a sporting peer, practised to perfection, whistling long and low sometimes to the piano beautifully.

Since the first American beauty conquered society by a sort of brusque rudeness, the true *ingénue* has gone out—the old ideal of sweet twenty who never saw farther than her nose or a vicarage garden. Higher education, ladies' clubs and latch-keys are utterly incompatible with mere wax dolls. She was a young lady who had once been described "with a mind," simply because she had had a few crazes. This was very hard, seeing that she only had ready pen; for instance, dabbled in journalism, had once frantically implored her good Welsh father to allow her to understudy an editor—good-looking, of course

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—of a monthly magazine or newspaper. She had worn for a month the necessary hideous garments, carrying a roll of manuscript with a view to qualifying in Grub Street, and worked with the spirit of a detective in fiction. Papa having refused point blank to consent to this arrangement, she had next gone in for the vegetarian craze, subsisting for six months mainly upon cocoanuts, lettuce and biscuits. But that one should be credited "with a mind," so detrimental, of course, to an unmarried woman, for having just a few fads like these, was, as she described it, "preposterous," only showing the ignorance of her critics. "A few crazes," she said "only proved her to be just very moderately up-to-date, and apart from this she could hunt half the day and dance half the night." She belonged to a Club which had a sphinx-like hall porter, "a Club which was one," she said, "that fixed on the altar of discretion," where she controlled the emotions of the establishment, gossiped indiscriminations, delighted in the extravagant consumption of "gold-tipped." It held a retinue of astute male servants, and the members all copied her way of fluttering in and out, with an air of having some grave object or business, her exact intonation in ordering a "whisky and soda" for a male guest at the sensational hour of supper. She led all those who smoked with difficulty, and secretly longed in their own hearts for their own hearths and "dominant lords." Andrea Malley, another guest, was a man who had Spanish blood in his veins—a fact to be recognized the first moment on seeing him. He invariably posed—unconsciously, of course, to himself—as a woman-quelling hero, and was not at all aware of a fact one or two discerning women saw at a glance—his own unfitness to live. His earnest, tanned face, with brilliant dark eyes, red lips, white teeth, jet-black hair, his whole expression, gipsy picturesque style, reminded one of a Spanish pirate, and was not

without considerable dangerous attraction for women, which, no doubt, was the reason of his presence here. Had he been decked in gay colours, he would have looked such a character to perfection—a real cut-throat, good-looking, pirate—but stupidly, for fancy dress, he always chose something else, unsuited to him. However, he was, as it were, disguised now as an easy-going young English gentleman. Now and then a quick glance of resentment, a moment of anger, showed his Spanish blood, his hereditary instincts; but only for a moment. He liked to appear calm and easy-going. He had some Saxon blood in him certainly, on his mother's side, but he wished to pretend he was wholly English. He was a great student, once had joined an Anthropological society in America, studied theology, medicine, astronomy, astrology and every weird subject, having no profession, living simply in an easy, quiet way on his moderate fortune—lived as ladies used to work, to pass the time away. He was good at thought-reading, and when exceptionally successful in his experiments, afterwards treated it with jocularly as if he were a trickster. People were grateful for the amusement when he would laughingly blindfold a pretty woman, then, by touching her, make her find anything they suggested to him to find. They had no idea of the dangerous forces they were playing with.

He was a discovery of the Countess Eulalia's. She had met him at the house of a "Spiritualistic" friend who was a popular novelist, a man who, in the interests of experimental "Spiritualism"—as it is generally understood by tricksters—had formed many undesirable acquaintances. People who disgraced it for money, gazing through crystals, telling fortunes at bazaars, having elegantly fitted boudoirs in Bond Street, pretending to be clairvoyants, where they fell asleep at a moment's notice, assuming to receive messages from another world, without having first

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developed in themselves the necessary goodness and absolute purity to meet such psychological conditions.

But Andrea Malley was not exactly what one would call one of these undesirable acquaintances. His behaviour was above reproach, and as he knew what worldly people liked best in the way of entertaining, made himself very popular. He was a good talker; some men tolerated him, a few liked him—when he did not too violently make love to or console their own wives; nearly all women adored him, for the simple reason he had a way of making every woman think he was really particularly in love with her and no one else. He had wonderful skill in this Modern Art. It is easy when women are not friends, but Andrea Malley even managed to create this feeling in all the women's minds, at a house-party, for instance, when they were assembled together—which showed his marvellous tact. He had a delightful way of saying nothing and looking a great deal, simply by being silent a moment as if he were in heaven, then moving an eyelid upward and giving his face a wholly pathetic, heart-broken expression, manœuvres most women found so very fascinating. He had once been described by a man of some intelligence as an attitudinising *poseur*, which may have been jealousy. Occasionally he got into trouble with the husbands, when the lady's impulses were uncontrolled and she believed too much in him, generally one not a match for him or the ways of modern Society.

He was, too, always excessively occupied with the changes in men's fashions, never ceasing to deplore the monotony of men's dress. He worried himself for hours over the width of braid or the length of tails to his coat. He dressed excellently. His mauve socks were a speciality. Fancy waistcoats gave him great scope regarding jewelled buttons, etc., his mood often depending on the way his tie was tied, if or not too butterfly in shape; and as for shirts, he said he went

in for damascene piqué, but had lately decided it gave a too creamy effect, so now he preferred that of a more fancy sprigged nature. His handkerchiefs cost anything up to ten pounds the dozen. His waistcoats were sonnets; his ties, a nine days' wonder! and Doris declared that he always kept a man about with him with a bag and a looking-glass.

Lady Ambrose often tried to argue the Countess Eulalia out of her belief in Spiritualism, that is Spiritualism as she imagined it to be—merely ignorant tests by worldly people for phenomena which are so appallingly dangerous. All scoffed inwardly at the at-present unknown phenomena of levitation, which was common with the saints and monks of ages past, and which the Catholic Church recognises, but without any effort to explain or to investigate in modern days, inconsistently only in modern days to condemn. In the end the hostess had always remarked: "Dear me! arguing with dear good Eulalia is the same thing exactly as arguing with the garden gate." And Countess Eulalia herself always replied sweetly, "Darling Mary, if you grow so vehement in your attack upon my belief, which is Knowledge, you will need a fresh supply of unforgettable English adjectives."

Lady Violet Dean was a woman who liked to wallow in diamonds which she described as her "late husband's family jewels" but which she had purchased at the Faulkner Diamond Company in Regent Street, and her pearls were really beautiful ones made in Birmingham. She preferred paying visits to debts. She was the daughter of a clergyman and was now about forty years of age, a good specimen of one of the typical figures of modern, blatant, coarse, purse-proud, vulgar Society where diamonds and jewels glitter over a plentiful profusion of breast and blade-bone. In her young days she had been pretty but more advanced in her notions than was permitted

by the Scotch country society in which she moved. She had been christened at nineteen by all the fast military men, "Sweet little Vi," a name which clung to her all through life ; so, naturally, she did not go down with the female portion of her set, who were jealous of her handsome face, figure and success, themselves full of false propriety, old-fashioned customs, the cramped conditions of their lives encouraging them to sneer always at a prettier woman. So Violet, inclined to be rapid, having always a host of admirers, naturally came in for her share of the world's lies, jealously circulated by her own sex.

Her history was much as it has been described. She had lately determined to live her life again upon a different plan, assuming an air of innocence, meekness quite unnatural, amiability and flattering forbearance. This sudden change to an open effervescing honest nature, like Doris's, was vastly irritating. "Lady Vi's new manner is really too much for me !" she once exclaimed in disgust. "She has returned to babyhood. Of course not the babyhood of to-day, for a twentieth-century baby knows as much of life as a woman of fifty in curls and mittens did a few years ago. Vi's new manner is the babyish seductiveness of the ideal school-girl. What will be the result of this new line remains to be seen. Will it be the good, good Dean ?" This was some of Doris's "bubbling" at a rate far exceeding the police limit.

Lady Violet, a mercurial butterfly soul, had made up her mind to marry money, so she began by spending much more than she could afford upon her gowns, and was—er—even not above occasionally accepting a diamond bracelet in exchange for nothing more substantial or compromising than a powdery kiss. One of those people who regard their clothes as the one thing really important in life, and, of course, cultivated the latest fashion in dogs. This time it was a Pom. "Every dog has its day," was a true

adage in her case. She had forced herself on Lady Ambrose, and had come with an object. The principal object was £50,000 a year; the secondary object the Dean! Her idea of womanhood most fascinating was a nice, pink, fluffy doll, and being tall and a pretty figure, she modelled herself on this idea rather effectively. Pink chiffon and delicious lacy frills was her way of fighting forlorn hopes, and most obstinate bachelorhood or widowerhood, not "married bachelorhood, for only real bachelorhood suited Lady Violet now," said Doris.

The Countess Eulalia Festetics was indeed a regal-looking woman, having passed middle age. In her face was an expression of repose and sweet, gracious dignity—a woman who had lived every hour of her life, and had suffered intensely, sufferings caused by her efforts at improving the world, instead of accepting everything—as nearly all other women did of her time—as it is! Sometimes her thoughts clouded her countenance with excessive dreaminess, illusion, amounting to real sentimentalism, which she professed to abhor. That it was a beautiful face was beyond all doubt, sad, colourless, an imposing profile and a commanding turn of the head. Lucius had once described her as "an exceeding lovable 'persona' of much sentiment, possibly tinged with mania." Her name, "Festetics," had sometime been changed into "Darling Countess Hysteries." There were a few unkind people who even went so far as to say she was mad, but that being such a very usual thing for commonplace dull people to say of those who have progressed a little more in the world of Thought and Ideation than themselves, no one of any consequence took much notice.

As regards the others, the less important guests of the house-party, there was one man with the not outrageously uncommon name of "Smith" which he had improved by putting "Stuart"

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before it—one of the few men here who should have been a woman, and yet he had been to the war. It is astonishing how many of this type did go to the war. He was like a dainty "Society doll," perched upon a writhing steed, leading Tommy Atkins. This particular young man, designed upon a khaki plan, when in his uniform looked a nice little tin soldier, or rather officer, and was a very high-bred confection. He had got fairly well over his enteric, and had made himself just sufficiently delicate-looking, with the assistance of a little face powder which suited him much better than gunpowder, decorating him up to the eyebrows, to be made a hero of by some of the wonderful women. But there are still women who will make a hero of anything. His slightly grazed arm daily rested gracefully in a sling. Stuart-Smith, for once in his life, was a hero. Anyway, he had something to be thankful to the Boers for, for that war had sent him home interesting.

Another man, a jovial creature named Harold Herbert, with a laughing face and figure, not conspicuous for natural slimness, who had lately shaved off his moustache, was modelling himself rather well on a good-looking popular barrister he admired. He had rampant hair and a slightly red nose, which he said made "a glad touch of colour on a pale pillow." Only two years ago, before he had got into "Society," he had been a guileless, good-natured young man, with half a million from Canada. To-day he was a very up-to-date twentieth century young man with sixpence—that is, real cash, but with debts amounting to about twenty thousand. He had been initiated in the ways of "Society," and had not been long in discovering how to live in it to be smart and fashionable. He now lived tolerably easily upon credit, meant later to use his experience by marrying an heiress, and admired Doris with that idea.

The other stray men, for the most part, were much

of the usual harmless type who hang around the tape-machines at clubs all the afternoon, trying hard to get up a new scandal and an appetite for dinner—with the exception of an acquaintance of the host's. This good-looking, good-natured man, without the faintest guide-post of a name, so to speak, had a thin veneer of an education, having been all his life absorbed only in finance in the City. He had in him immense possibilities and goodness, which explains the host's liking for him. His parents had unfortunately died early, and had been only able to give him in his youth a little education; and instead of later educating himself, as many monied men have done, he went on spending his life money-making. So he was at present undeveloped, and, when among very intellectual people, something of a fish out of water.

He said openly that he had no use for superfluous brains, or brains at all, except as a commercial commodity; and the only flag he had ever cared for was that of Ambition, money-making, pushing many down, and casting slurs on many carelessly in his life's struggle, to, as he described it, "get ahead of them" in business. He was a business man, and this was how he described "the life's battle" he had desperately fought. That which might be better described as the typical rat-activities of the present-day money-making business world, in which terrible acts of injustice are committed every day in the name of justice, errors proclaimed as truths,—forms and theories mistaken for principles. At the same time he was most interesting to the student of character. God, and His builders, or, "The Great Creative Principle of the Universe," for some purpose had given him this part, atom of the great whole, great success in his undertakings in relation to others all his life, allowed him thus to easily stride over others and obtain everything he set his mind upon, and all

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his ideals up to the present were very worldly. So he had grown, from habit and contact with his own world, to look upon the Universe only as a place surrounding the great "I!—I!—I!" Other people whom he met and crushed in his business enterprises he thought of as merely unimportant objects standing in his way, or not, useful to him, or otherwise, as the case might be; until, having realized all his own ambitions, the whole world would then become, he anticipated, a stage surrounding him for his own enjoyment and ends. Now, at last, having almost attained all his worldly ambitions, with no actual satisfying resources in himself, he was reduced to subsist upon the excitement the world, as he knew it, offered him. Naturally, having been allowed to push his way so easily in the city, where the pass-words are "the devil take the hindmost" while other men, more intelligent and clever, had no success, he grew vain, and felt he had something in him more praiseworthy than all others. His life had been a combat of one man against another, one mind against another, and then the horrible grasping, the holding and striving. He had still to learn the unity of all life. He could not, of course, drop all this in a moment, drop out of that whirlpool of contending forces and forget that terrible life's battle he had from a boy been obliged to take part in, or conquer his passions and his lower nature by immediately developing the higher; subordinating all sensations, worldly excitements, pleasures and selfish gainings to intellect, thus realising his real part in the great scheme of things. Before the individuality expands, the personality must shrink, and that is why his fate had brought him here to this point. This clear sailing in the city, this crushing of others out of the field, created an atmosphere of selfishness around him which, without really knowing it, he brought with him into this other softer side of life which he at first had looked

upon as a sort of absurd pleasure-seeking playground, where his money would surely make the waxwork figures, men and women—particularly the women—jump about as he wished, and as it did in the City, seeing that he began by pressing upon Society all that to his worldly mind appeared necessary to its women—diamonds, balls and well-meant dinners. He thought nothing of injuring and deceiving their husbands.

This portion of the world is crowded by men and by women full of much the same ideas, of extreme selfishness, pleasure-seeking, of mercenary instincts; but now, fortunately, creeping into Society are higher thoughts, and a more refined intellectual atmosphere, in the best social life. There are many more evolved to whom money is as nothing, dross, to whom a mere rat-like ability for money-making is not commendable, leaving a man at the end with his finer mental faculties undeveloped, his best talents all uncultivated, to whom he is a piteous deplorable being; and there were even one or two here, as well as the host, who appreciated a man for himself alone. It was a point in the destiny of this man, after his life's battle, to now meet them. His want of education retarded him, for that removes all evils; having made money, his thoughts now were of obtaining an imposing title, and he suddenly developed a passion for Royalty. Doris had said to him once, that the new titles sounded so appropriate to their newness, but that "as yet there was no 'Peer of Clapham Junction.'" "Lord Brixton," too, was non-existent, though we had gone very near both those places for names lately. One member of it, quite a mile from the throne, had been known to go to a secluded hotel abroad for health and rest. A friend of this man's, named Mr Facebothways, from whom he seemed to take inspiration, followed in his footsteps, and took up quarters at an hotel opposite. Then he wrote daily letters of

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invitation to luncheon. The member of Royalty had to write forty-seven excuses, but about the forty-eighth time he generally failed to invent an excuse, so the man attained his object. Once the member of Royalty had been obliged to fall down a few flights of stairs and to slip in his bath, to be enabled to evade his invitations and to send a prompt legitimate refusal.

The two men had once joined together in building a winter garden for a Royal Princess, and at last were both invited to a royal house-party, and Doris O'Carroll had laughingly teased them, that at last they "mingled with marchionesses who really were entitled to 'march,' and countesses who 'count' with real and not highly imaginative biographies." When the women of the family returned, they tried to cultivate the quiet, dignified royal manners, but this weak imitation, contrasting favourably with their usual pompous personalities, was most unfortunately combined with a somewhat Cockney accent. People like these give themselves immense trouble, and imagine it entails endless time and expense to get really into Society, having only one idea of progress—namely, a "sort of social progress and ambition." Self-knowledge or the progress of their own inner consciousness and of those with whom they are brought into contact and work for humanity never occurs to them as being much more essential and better for themselves. Had they only known it, they need only have lent Society money to gamble with; but it is extraordinary the various paths people take upwards, or rather downwards, and their small ambitions. One foolish young man, with an idiotic aspiration in that direction, did most absurd things, attended drawing-room meetings for three solid years, where a popular Marchioness moved a weekly resolution on behalf of "the London cat;" but unfortunately he never got farther in his social

progress, because she eventually married him, and then he died of dulness. How curious is the outward show of character. Our money-making guest was slow in his climbing, but the Great Builders, the unseen forces, meant soon to leaven his mind in spite of his happy unconsciousness of the process; and although he little dreamed of it, modern Society was not to be for him a playground, but to give him his first initiation, and not to be a means simply of gratifying his vanity and passions as he imagined, having gained all and succeeded in the City. But at present, the cosmopolitan religion of the time is material Prosperity, Wealth the Divinity.

Countess Eulalia, as well as being an interesting character, was a brilliant investigator of the obscure phenomena of the subliminal self. Unselfishness was one of the laws of her being, yet in spite of this, inconsistent as it sounds, she was to a large degree self-engrossed. At the present time, her cares having slightly affected her mind, she was given to exaggeration, growing too excited and enthusiastic over her "hobbies" or "manias." Her life had been full of shadows, a wonderfully eventful one, as she had once possessed great influence in diplomatic circles, and she was still the secret "confidante" of many foreign crowned heads. Among people of royal blood she was usually the most imposing personage, more dignified than many who offered her their friendship and sat upon a throne. When a beautiful girl of seventeen she had married a man, a rich diplomat, belonging to the ancient *noblesse* of France, who developed into a confirmed *roué*. Misery followed, in which the girl struggled against the customs and usages which used to drag and bind down women, obstructing their clear vision and independence, casting upon them all the petty trivialities of life; which treated them as "half-angels, half-idiots," and absurdly flattered them.

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She had her struggles, often nearly sank through sheer exhaustion into this mire—to that old-fashioned place assigned to women by an unthinking, unintelligent civilisation of a former lower stage of evolution, placing them *en masse* with children, or lunatics, instead of expanding and developing their individuality. When asked for her opinion she would sometimes stand for a moment in silence, and with awesome magnificence, as if inspired by an invisible intelligence, speak the thoughts that came to her, firmly, with that certainty which only comes at last from experience, real hard thinking and a powerful brain. Now, whether speaking in flowing liquid Italian, French, or German, her words, sweetly melodious voice, manner, and attitude, never failed to carry strong conviction. Her appearance and speech seemed somehow to magnetise, inspire, give courage and strength, but just now her influence was in danger of slightly waning. At fifty-five years, tall, erect, beautiful, she looked every inch a queen, born to command. At one time she had wished to be a sort of leader of women, but perhaps carried this to a degree of exaggeration which rendered it absurd, and some people, not understanding her motives, or a mind so much in advance of her time, were of the opinion she did in this line more harm than good, leading women possibly to dangerous paths by her views of their future advancement in the world, and then leaving them there "on a precipice," the problem of what to do with them then still unsolved.

Three years after her marriage seemed to mark the boundary of her youth. Then she had said—"I have grasped the whole situation of womanhood." She became a rapid volcanic thinker and writer, a diplomat, in her words—"a human being as well, and not merely a woman," as many of her sex preferred to be. She evolved quickly until she stood upon the

high levels of the mental plane, while many of those around her remained stationary, hence the discord and contradiction of thought she had to contend with.

One day she remarked to her husband, "I have been studying women. All their misery is due to ignorance, error, and grave maladjustment, still hindering their evolution and that of the entire world. They were taught by their mothers that the highest 'ideal' of their lives was to be called 'a true woman.' That meant then to become 'weak and womanish,' or 'merely a woman and nothing else:' wives and mothers of large families, adoring all little petty things described as 'feminine,' bringing up their children in the same fashion. Encouraged to kill out all independent thought, appealing always to masculine judgment about their own sex, preventing progress and nursing dependence. A grand, beautiful ideal they thought it, and the more trustful, gullible and silly, the more fascinating and womanly, of course, obeying and trusting their husbands and all male relations with the most infantile faith in their honesty, nobility and goodness. Result, often terrible disaster, as so few men are honest, noble and good. Such ideals are to be tolerated only when the world and men are good and perfect. When men are no longer thieves and savages, when the wisdom of fathers is infallible, and in fact when men are perfect, and no trace of their animal ancestors is in them, like 'the ideal man,' as represented by Christ. The world," said the Countess, "was not then sufficiently evolved to receive such an 'ideal.' So with woman. She has been expected to live up to an impossible unpractical ideal, in a cruel, wicked world, hence the misery almost inevitably to be endured by every woman who tries to follow this *role*—that is, to the entire extinction of all others, and often of her reason. Every female child from her cradle should be taught first, that she

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is a 'human being,' the question of sex disregarded. A human soul, situated in a curious planet, in the midst of a universe of which as yet very little is known, among millions of other souls like her, children of one Creator. At the present day souls have not risen above and left off their bodies inherited from their animal ancestors; the stronger are still usurping the rights of the weaker, the dominant are still creating the negative, and in the same way as throughout past generations, the dominant are brutally casting cares and burdens upon the negative. But all the same, sexless souls nevertheless. These animal bodies influence us just to the extent that we allow ourselves to be influenced and made negative. Souls born into feminine forms on earth by an accident of birth stand a chance, unless all this is carefully explained to them, of bearing all the pains and sorrows cast upon them by the dominant, and such souls born into masculine bodies often become extinct, stifled to death by the usurpation of the worldly bodily physical matter they are clothed in, inherited from savage ancestry, matter mastering mind instead of mind matter. Others more slowly evolving, become—"

"Yes, yes, yes! my dear wife!" the Count had interrupted impatiently, "But we will, pardon me, continue the discussion to-morrow. Good-bye, beloved angel, I have an appointment which it nearly breaks my heart I am forced to keep, and thus to part from you."

In spite of the sea of controversy she encountered, the beautiful Countess kept to her convictions, and had every female child in her schools taught "that she was a human being," considerably hampered by sex. Her *role* as woman, as wife, although a good ideal, was generally unpractical, a secondary one to that of an individual, independent, thinking, intelligent person. Naturally, she so shocked the Church,

which she daringly declared had been the enemy of woman, because it absolutely ignored her rights, and still preaches to her in the twentieth century submission and obedience to the stronger but often the inferior male, callously completing such contracts by handing her over body and soul to all the worse instincts of that other half of humanity, chaining them she called it, that it was no wonder she became at one time looked upon as a dangerous heretic by good Catholics. She built a mansion for herself at Constantinople, devoting it to the advancement of all "human beings," clothed in this world in feminine bodies. It was only by enquiry one found it was meant solely for women. She found some sacred writings in an old convent, and these she printed in large letters in the entrance hall. They are writings now called apocryphal and suppressed. The one she chose was given by Clement, declaring plainly, and in these words: "The Kingdom of God and the Spirit can only come when the two shall be as one. The increase, development and growth of disunity of the sexes begat disjunction, abstractedness and disconnection between spirit and soul, and between soul and body. This was the fall of man, which introduced and has perpetuated the false balance of placing woman as the inferior part of humanity, and not until the feminine principle in both is grown and exalted on all planes, crowned and glorified, can humanity, whether in the individual, in communities, or the whole race, attain to Spirit-truth, to soul-knowledge, Christhood, and to God. Womanhood shall no longer be engulfed in the errors of past ages."

All this was carved by her in stone over the entrance of her schools, and when a suitable age, the girls were taught something of sex-ethics and psychology from the ancient, secret, valuable writings she had discovered in her old convent, which were never shown but to those initiated into her schools.

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One of the late Emperors became her friend, assisting her at last in her work of the enlightenment and the good education of all Turkish women, particularly those in harems, many of which her good influence helped to abolish. The women themselves would have perhaps preferred to have stayed there and gossiped probably with other little brides. She was almost worshipped at last for the good she did for the people, building schools, spending enormous sums of money, absolutely careless of her own necessities and interests. Years after when her husband died, she returned to England with only a very moderate fortune compared with her original one. Left to herself, she looked around in amazement. "Dear me!" she said, "I need not have begun with the harems. My work was just like that of missionaries going away, when there is so much work to do at home. For here every little female child is still encouraged from childhood to throw herself away to any ordinary male who asks for her, for a miserable livelihood, and this they, in this country, call Marriage, and indeed often it is—er—marriage, without troubling Church or Registrar. Dear me! it is all very sad, and yet I—I began foolishly with the—harems!" Then she sighed, "Well, if it is the custom, and women are brought up to give themselves to men, for anticipated material comfort and freedom from care, seeing the world seems constructed upon such a plan, that it makes it almost impossible to do otherwise, for the sake of womanhood, as a whole, I am not sure that it would not be wiser if in England every rich man after all should be compelled to support not one, but hundreds of women. You see the maladjustment lies here in every female child being taught to be wives and mothers only, instead of learning arts or crafts, when, owing to the superfluity of the sex and each male, rich or otherwise, being allowed only one wife, only a few can legitimately be wives. So the

rest, after being forced to grow up wasting the best years of their ridiculous lives, perhaps degrading themselves by trying to find men who can support them, for whom they do not care, and bearing the misery of wifehood with him, have to turn upon the world, struggle for existence, incapable, incapacitated through these absurd ideas being forced upon them in their early youth, and not one of their talents cultivated in time.

"Dear me," sighed the good and beautiful but very mistaken Countess, again and again, "and yet I began with the—harems, when I should have begun with 'the little silly, inane, white slaves of England.' Slaves of shops or street, dressing themselves to appeal to the lower natures of men. I think that if women are brought up like this, every rich man should indeed be made, either to still support as many women as he possibly can, or be heavily taxed towards the support and proper education and training of the women of his country. There would then be no disappointed, incapacitated spinsters, no incapable women trying to earn a livelihood, fighting without proper weapons, often against a hard, pitiless world of men, while the one rich man loads *one* woman, his wife, with all the most unnecessary luxuries of life. I am not sure that this is not the secret of all the evils we strive to remedy, and all the misery in this uneven world, which women still suffer. I think now, better far the safety of—harems! Oh! my work indeed may have been wrong in Turkey after all. Oh! how full of problems is this life, and that is quite another problem!"

This was the Countess Eulalia Festetics.

She had once written a clever political book which was of great use to the country, but at that time men were not kind, and were unfavourably disposed towards women encroaching upon any of their fields. "A woman's place is in the home," they said, "hers

the rôle of wife's deference and a mother's patience." "Yes," she said, "that is right, but there are incapable men in homes—what then?" She was held up for scorn for combating with those who were engaged in the struggle for existence. The book they described as *A Woman's Politics*, and wound up with a quotation from Ruskin, which may have been justifiable, as her book was written when her mind was given greatly to exaggeration. "The end of all the right education for woman is to make her love her home better than any other place, holding a good queen as a model, the smile and gentle words of a husband or child, because nothing delighted her more than little every-day pleasures." "When women slight her great example," this well-meaning reviewer went on, "and scorn the wife's deference, then will come the decay of all nobility, nay, the death to the race itself."

The good Countess read the review and it made her think deeply. "Yes! that's all very well from a man's point of view, and when he can always be certain of providing her with the home," she said. She was blessed sometimes with divine imagination, and began to think of herself in the place of the superfluous woman for whom it was meant. "I believe the Church of to-day seems to make a woman suffer, and condones the sins of man," she next ejaculated. She understood so perfectly the sorrows of suffering, downtrodden womanhood, which cried out to her clear vision in every bit of common human life around her. "All caused by error, man's brutal passions and false laws," she murmured. "Of all powers to be cultivated most, for the progress of the world, is imagination; it is the eye of the soul. When this faculty is perfect, each human being will actually put himself, or rather project himself by thought, into the position of the other. Well, I am glad this has come to me, I have finished with politics. I will aid my country

with subtle diplomatic hints from foreign courts no more. I am a woman, I will not aid a country that does nothing to ensure the independence of its woman-kind, and has not yet made proper laws for her; but instead of giving help, preaches to her obedience, submission, and an often impossible ideal of wifehood, motherhood, and dependence. A *role* only for the few, while the rest are left with many of the professions still closed to them, unassisted in their work, left to prostitution—a profession men never close to them—or starvation. Indeed, a country that it would appear in some cases instead of helping every woman to independence, who has helped to populate it, allows and even forces her to this by its old unimproved customs and laws. It stands by, listening, too, to the laugh of some of its 'Members of Parliament' when a discussion is at last proposed, after generations of scorn, on the 'inabilities of women,' as if it were some joke, still preferring to discuss, and becoming more enthusiastic over, 'Belleville boilers' than any necessary women's questions and inabilities. A country that sees insults to women, instead of compelling man to stop and remember that he owes his existence to her—and there is even at this late day, still somewhat the necessity of being born—allows him to turn and make her his slave still, and in many phases of life placing her at every possible disadvantage when it might, by new laws, defend and cause men to reverence all women, as he would his own mother and own women relatives, which men never do to unfortunate women outside in the world, unless they belong to them. While woman is expected still, of course, to perform her mission to the world—her own country in particular—and perpetuate the race, yet still she sees her sex crushed under men's feet, often having to battle for existence against, instead of in co-operation with them, to whom she gives birth, thus battling actually

against the very world she populates. She, in whose hands lies the future destiny of mankind, is expected to still ignore and smile amiably upon these sad conditions, to see her own sex like floating rafts, insecure, broken and wrecked upon stormy seas. No more politics for me!" continued the Countess, "if I work now at all, it will be against my country, until before its wars, anything else in life, it considers, first of all, its women—considers its race-producers, protects and helps to support the entire sex as its most valuable possession, as a huge body of race-producers, necessary to its existence. Now, my work will be to show that the worst form of evil—that evil which is too bad to mention—is the inevitable result of the absurd traditions surrounding women, the ideal of wifehood, sentimentality, submission, and deference to man, upheld before all others. My first step now to write pamphlets under my own name, to circulate them in thousands, with only one object—to create discontent with the present order of things, instead of sentimentality, deference, and submission, in the minds of women and girls of the future generation. To make all women workers at something—economic units, instead of encouraging, as the sentimental books of to-day still do—future womanhood—represented by every little shopgirl, and others—to waste her youth with *one* innate idea underlying it, trying to make herself seductively 'feminine' or what is supposed to be womanish and attractive, with the object of marrying. To teach her rather to treat all such manœuvres of her mothers and grandmothers with contempt, and to generally—I say generally—look upon 'marriage' as a true form of mediæval torture, which she will perhaps be lucky if she is clever enough to miss. Teaching them all to join hand and hand, and refuse to perpetuate the race until they are all as a body, a whole, protected by

the world as represented by the different countries to which they belong. Not one rich man to protect only one woman—his own wife—but all women equally, as his country's valued race-producers. This is for present-day mothers to instil in the minds of female children, then will perhaps begin reform. At the root of all evil, for women, is this ignorance and absurd faith in man, and the foolish way they are trained to look forward to 'marriage,' and to give themselves readily and trustfully to men. I," said the Countess, "will teach women to refuse themselves, and to raise themselves. Ah! my sympathy, indeed, is now for moralists like Marcel Prevost and Gaston Deschamps. My work may have no result in this generation, not until the next perhaps, but my books shall depict the true or otherwise lives of women, as mothers, wives, sisters, prostitutes, dependent on men—then as workers of all kinds, showing that in whichever of these former *rôles*, at present, woman is still invariably absolutely forced to endure cruel injustices and abominable unfairness, owing to the wickedness of men, the erroneous attitude of the world and its ridiculous ideas, laws, customs, and dominated, influenced, wrongly-persuaded against her own interests by men. If women are to forget they are 'human beings' and live only for the *rôle* men and churches assign to them—in this age they should receive sustenance then from the world they populate by conforming to this *rôle* for their country's benefit. Her own country requires the fruit of her pains to arm it, but what does it pay her in return? There are writers preaching 'Fecundity'; would it not be well first to preach some sort of protection for the weaker half of humanity, or recompense to women who are suffering, owing to this universal ideal being held up to them and are thus incapacitated and uneducated for work, having unquestionably fulfilled the mission expected

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of them? There are women who have spent their whole lives in nursing the absurd 'feminine ideal,' who have been both wives and mothers, yet who are afterwards left knocked about the world often to starve. In another generation I hope the marriage laws will be so changed that poverty, anxiety for women who have borne children for their country, will be impossible. I will try and instil into the minds of every female child, that man is her natural enemy, and to be avoided, except in rare cases. Not teach her in a half-hearted way, but try to enkindle hatred in her heart, until men show themselves men, and place her on a pedestal where the Great Principle of the Universe assigns her to be above their heads raising them, not under their feet lowering them—even the most despised of women. Until they unite, protecting *all* women as a whole, because they are women, and not individually—not each man merely his own wife and his own children, because they happen to be his possessions, which is only another form of selfishness, because they are all pleasing to him, while he helps to sneer outside his home, to create lying scandals of most women, and to help to crush down all other unfortunate women he meets in his life's struggle, merely because he does not happen to require them, or else mankind requires them too much—that is, requires them in an unfortunate position. Crushing them, too, by the 'rat activities' he calls Business, and unjust laws. Protecting his own, because his own are his possessions, and administer to his comfort, pleasure, happiness and senses, his duty to them often at the root only another form of greed and selfishness! By his attitude thus, in the streets and elsewhere, assisting in the degradation of other women around, cheapening and crushing womanhood outside.

"Is it possible I am living in England?" gasped the poor, good Countess. "That dear country which

claims and pretends to be the pioneer of Justice and Freedom throughout the world, and yet so forgetful, careless still by her false, hideous, old marriage laws, etc., so cruelly unjust to its women." Here she wiped away some tears. "I think I shall take myself off again to America or Turkey and try and undo the work I tried to do among the harems."

After her excited, incoherent, conversations on women, the Countess was always forced to take a good dose of sal-volatile to recover her usual spirits, but in this instance she laid aside the disturbing review which the male reviewer had meant as good advice for some superfluous woman trying to earn a livelihood. This was H.S.H. the Comtesse Eulalia de Salvatoria Festetics, otherwise wickedly libelled by Doris, "Madame Hysterics," for brevity.

Louis Volvois was a very good-looking author, who had made one or two "hits" in the literary world, and now wrote a very amusing popular letter every week for a well-known magazine headed, "From my Note-book." He had been left very early in life without any living relatives, and had to work for himself, and there was now and then a pathetically sad expression on his face when in repose. He was a singularly interesting, clever young man, a good, even noble character, and devoted to Doris O'Carroll.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER DINNER

"Si foret in terris, rideret Democritus!"

("If Democritus were on earth now, how he would laugh!")

LOSSES at cards, late hours and other vicissitudes show themselves plainly on the breakfast-table faces. To some, this is one of the most trying ordeals of the "up-to-date house-party" of social intercourse, the most brilliant becoming like dull tracts or indifferent sermons. At this matutinal meal, human nature appears at its worst, and character may be judged occasionally from the hour and manner in which it is partaken. Thus many ultra-fashionable "twentieth-century" people have banished it from their *modus vivendi*, and partake of it in the sanctity of their own apartments—if the household harbours sufficient servants—which of course this one did. People who retire to bed but a few hours before, the men boisterously happy and the very best of good fellows, develop in that short time into apparently morose, taciturn, unapproachable beings, or "bears." For the women it is a terrible trial—for the appearance. Indeed for all women who live to study that, better far the Continental fashion of steaming coffee and hot rolls in bed and the later *déjeuner* about mid-day. For at a party of this sort, or indeed at any house-party, how is it possible to surmise what startling tragedies of infatuation and bitter disillusion may take place within a few short hours, and it was those wise ones here who desired not to cause a rude awakening, who refrained from appearing until kinder hours.

There were here of course many healthy robust beings, who went down to the first early English breakfast, arrayed in all the accoutrements still held necessary for pursuing the fox or dealing death by the covert side among the turnips. But Lady Ambrose was a very tactful hostess in everything, so everyone did entirely as they liked best here. The reports from the partridge-shooting were most conflicting. So there were keen shots, who preferred to wait now until later, and small gunners content to "walk up" the birds, and make small bags.

Each day here had its own little gossip, event, and interest for every moment, and this one—all breakfasts being over very soon—began again to wear itself out very quickly as it always seems to do when all guests are enjoying themselves.

After an uneventful day it was soon again nearly five o'clock. It had become impossible for the host to exist any longer without getting rid of some of his views on the fiscal and other questions—the dear host of the old *régime*, a perfect English gentleman, who had never in his whole life insinuated a lie or created a false impression, always choosing his own friends with discretion, and at exactly five o'clock to-day one or two of them were seated with him in the library.

"In my opinion," began Sir Edward, solemnly, "Mr Chamberlain's system leaves the British wheat-grower without help. The enormous deluge of wheat from foreign countries during the last two decades is ascribed by some to Cobden, when I think his system has nothing to do with it. As somebody writes in one of the newspapers: 'Not any more than a refreshing modest shower of rain sent down upon dried-up earth has any affinity at all with "Noah's great flood," which swamped the whole earth.'"

"You are right," returned Louis Volvois, "the situation is, I think, a new one. To be considered as

a new question, and not as a result blamed to old organisers. The price of wheat, they say, prevailing during the past years, is supposed to form a fixed dividing line between our Prosperity and our Ruin, with a big 'R.' Did you ever hear such an absurdity?"

"And yet Cobden was perfectly right, and even his own disciples, I fancy—I may be wrong, of course—will not see this," continued the host, persistently. "It sounds ridiculous, inconsistent, but he anticipated everything, and these anticipations have been exactly realised with regard to agriculture. This, the impassioned free trader says is not so, I believe. Now, I wonder who is right?"

"I think if the immense imports of wheat from foreign countries could really have been seen, Sir Edward," said Louis Volvois—"and I cannot agree that this was seen when the British Corn Laws were repealed—free trade might have prophesied the entire extinction of agriculture!"

"And yet has not the value of our good soil signally increased!" broke in the host.

"Sir Edward!—Agricultural Cobdenism was exactly realised, I think, between 1840 and 1876, and did not disappear for eight years after. Cobdenites were laughing at the predictions of the Protectionists thirty-eight years after the repeal of the Corn Laws. This is what my father said in 1872."

Louis Volvois, who was usually always thinking about ten steps ahead of the argument, seemed, on this occasion, to be going backward. But here their conversation was interrupted by Mr Trelawney, with the light of slaughter in his eyes and blood kindling after a day's sport—and there was very good sport at Sir G. Ambrose's country-house, as it was surrounded by huge woods and copses swarming with game. The bag for four days had exceeded eight thousand head. The week before the principal

rabbit warrens were shot over, and the smaller pheasant coverts. Many of the women were expert horse-women. Some who had, during the last year, taken up trap-shooting, became expert at breaking the clay pigeons, the men teaching them to use their breech-loaders. There had also been the formal opening of the fox-hunting season at a historic meet.

"No broken collar-bones, you see, or broken-in hats. The best run of the season in the hunt. A nine-mile point at an excellent pace in the Sussex county. People really should ride to hunt, not hunt to ride!" said Mr Trelawney.

"The soaking weather recently against everything! Which would it be best to attribute it to—radium, sun-spots, or the angry flashes in the atmosphere, caused by Mr Chamberlain's political opponents?" remarked Louis Volvois.

"The packs around here have particularly strong huntsmen and excellent 'whippers-in.' A fox jumped up, and hounds drove him prettily through the Sarcepoor Woods," continued Mr Trelawney. "The village, you know, is a very easy hack from Sarcepoor. It crossed my mind that some of the valley would be heavy-going. Visions of stake-bound fences, newly cut, and laid with uncompromising ditches, arose. However, my hunting courage gained strength below the lane, and here the hounds inspired the field to ride. By this time everyone's blood was up, and the first rank had several recruits. Doris had to save 'taking a fall' by sitting back and leaving her horse's head alone. One man fell short and slipped into a ditch. Then a nasty fence, but I went on, without parting company with my horse. The mare topped at something that looked like a gate. Pack leaned to the left. Then came a real high gate, which a man had to run down to, and this brought us over the road, and with hounds. I'm a man who loathes to be spoken to. My horse once bucked me

into the undergrowth, and I lost a start, but got away wide of the hounds. Fox jumped up in front. A scurry, and all made fresh start through a brutal fence. Then the hounds killed near Lady Selbrook's Booker's Hall. The pick of the county generally!"

Mrs Trelawney entered the room, and they all rose.

"It's bad weather, and I'm in my oldest habit. Ah! but if my habit's shabby, my horse is of the best! A brown Irish mare from Wexford. Plain, but game! A good fencer, having now discovered that short blackthorns are not banks. Small, but does not find the fences too big. A man in front on a headstrong horse tumbled through a nasty fence."

"I could never settle here," her husband was heard to say; "the country is like a bird-cage!"

He was a true sportsman at heart, and rarely satisfied, with complete control over his field. The most eager field in England was held in check sometimes by his presence.

"The hounds had nothing to say in the way of scent. They were silent, or else it was too hot. They had no time to speak."

"I saw you, Valerie, on your favourite roan horse. I hope you do not think I was your man in front."

"Oh, no!" she returned, smiling at the idea. They never rode for show, but where the hounds were they were almost sure to be.

"The country has difficulties and disadvantages. The stock lives in the fields most of the winter, and the field is eager. Has the troubles of a grass country, but delightful for all that. All grass fences cut. Blackthorn hedges, wide ditches, some oxers, and many, many gates, apart from very little level ground in the hunt, except the fox fortress at Sarcepoor. The slopes of the hills easy and bland, com-

pared with some. There were lots of foot people. Hills full of foxes."

"Our dear hostess is one of the best women I ever saw over a country," said Lucius Macnamary, who had immediately followed Mrs Trelawney.

"Oh! there is no room here for mediocrity in man or horse," replied Mr Trelawney, in a contradictory frame of mind.

"A horseman on a real hunter, fast and clever; and that is what you are," said Lucius.

"A man or woman with moderate nerves and a moderate horse may do somewhere else. I am used to the cream of sport. But the foxes have increased and wire decreased, sport a certainty, provided the smallest scent. No big woods to annoy huntsmen and master. I much prefer the open—hounds need never be out of sight."

"The hunt conducted to benefit the whole district," again remarked Lucius.

"Who can tell the exploit of a bred fox?" said Valerie. "The meet at Sarcepoor coverts, never scent more serving, I thought. Fox at once took country between Keegate and Bathly. This gave hounds an advantage, always racing and tending to the right. Bathly now in front, fox crossed road, made for woods. Bulk of field swung open gate, making play on good galloping ground, of the lane into woods. Left many followers behind. They stretched away over the lovely country. The hounds swung around, and the poor fox found refuge in the little pit.

"Pace slacked a little at the last few fields, and but for this, and pace at first, he must have beaten every one, country so difficult. A poor alarmed fox had taken refuge in a churchyard. The hounds were the masters, lovely bitch pack, a notable pack, looking less to outside crosses than some of the well-known kennels of the present day. Every one of pack up at finish."

"Needs a man and a horse not only bold, but accustomed to the country," said the host.

"The run of the season took place from a tree in Lord Selbrook's coverts. A bobtailed fox. An envious and knowing member of the field came to grief over a brook in a forward place over the grass, miles from where fox was found. He came out on right side, and rejoined hounds, pace slackened, but he lost part of this lovely gallop," Lucius Macnamary said to Sir Edward Ambrose.

Mr Trelawney came of a hard riding family; their names appeared in hunting history during the last hundred years. He was a Leicestershire man in his style of riding and rapid decisive method of handling hounds. His wife cared more for hounds than the riding side of the country. She was a daughter of one M.F.H. and sister of another. They both first saw hounds in Leicestershire.

"When last I entered this room about an hour ago I heard you saying your prayers with Sir Edward," said impertinent Doris, addressing Louis Volvois, coming in through the French window, in a very muddy habit. "And politics, up to the present, seem to be accepted here as a purely masculine interest," she continued still more impertinently. "There are some energetic males still playing billiards and bridge. The smoking-room has now become a place from which they are only torn by force, and which resounds sometimes with gentle snores."

"What do you mean about politics—your first remark, Doris?" asked the host, looking at her in amazement, as he always did.

"Oh, don't you know, the latest prayer in these days of the 'big and little loaf,' on every placard. No?—Oh, well—in the old days it used to be—'Our Father which art in Heaven,' etc. But nowadays it goes on like this—'Give us this day our daily bread, please—er—Mr Cobden.'"

"Doris, how can you be so shocking and inconsistent, as well as irreverent."

Some more of the guests came upon them, interrupting Doris. The host and his chosen friends were separated, and a great deal of chattering went on. Louis Volvois, succeeding in drawing Doris to a cosy corner, drifted into discussing things that lay dearest of all to his heart, his own life's work, and on such occasions the girl became the listener.

"The stream of the last ten years' views and tendencies fights against Nietzsche, against 'Uebermenschen,' and 'Ueberweiber,' and especially against the pessimism of Ibsen and Tolstoy who, some say, kill desire of life. 'Lebensfreude' fights against degenerate pathological literature, and all recent authors, who for the sake of pseudo-æsthetic passion, depict the most disgusting filth, and despair of the misery of modern life. But at last are signs of the return to wholesome thought. Oh! for the healthy life of Luther, or Goethe and Poetry, nourished at the bosom of Mother Nature! Free, lofty, joyful, not sickly and decadent. There is now a new form of novel called '*À Rebours*.' Some one writes that it is one which a reader might dream over for weeks, seeming to foreshadow the future of souls, to create a mental atmosphere between its writer and the ideal reader. Something of spiritual collaboration. Now in Peter Attemberg's writings, his critics say there is a golden hedge between himself and the world—that he knows only the feminine sex—but as for men, for him, there is only one—himself. How unkind that seems!" Louis Volvois now was in one of his critical, serious moods—moods grown through his habit of work at reviews. "He has a stronger sentiment—as sickly as Przybyszewski's," he continued. "'Unfortunately, a great many of us are conceited enough to believe we have an imagination like Hoffman or Edgar Allan Poe,' writes a reviewer friend in a monthly

magazine, 'when our characters are fancy-paper ones, and our situations created as if in a fever.' How true that is. He was a clever reviewer who wrote that. It is a pleasure to read and study his remarks. 'And as for logic,' he goes on to say, 'equal to that, binding our symbolists, or Paul Scheerhart, the head mandarin of Berlin fantastists.' A publisher of great repute, H. G. Meyer of Berlin, has a special magazine called *Heimat*. I have used it with success as a vehicle for some political articles lately. Did you ever hear of it before, Doris? And have you ever read of Stanislaus Przybyszewski—a difficult name to remember correctly—a Pole of 1868?" asked Louis, in one of his most absent-minded moods.

"Never," answered Doris.

"He was a bold stylist; my friend wrote of him that it was he who brought back to the language the ancient force of expression and sentiment. Huysmans is another well-known mystical erotic French writer, and Frederick Schlegel, the leader of Romanticists. Then there is a newly-discovered, and such a clever woman, who loves to dream like Novalis and Kleist. Oh! when in Paris, I revel in the society of poets, painters, authors, sculptors, orators, historians. When we are married, you will join me and love the life too."

"Umph!" Doris returned with a queer smile. "I am not so sure of it."

"All crafts the easy-going wots not of. But in novels, and in real life, alas, the race of romantic lovers is dead. A realist says that the noble, wonderful heroine of a novel is impossible in the present day. A moralist would be quite indignant with her for becoming the wife of a modern Philistine."

"Won't I do for a heroine in your next?" interrupted audacious Doris, putting her hand through his arm and leaning her curly-haired head for a moment upon his shoulder. "If you want to marry

me, surely I'll do for a heroine. The unmarried girl is worth serious study, she is no longer to be regarded as an open book to be read in a careless moment."

"Yes, dear, you will," said Louis, and seeing they were well out of sight, giving her a genuinely lover-like kiss, before she was aware of it, and to her amazement, he said: "This, you know, is to announce our engagement." But no one, to Doris's thankfulness, took much notice of them away in their corner, the twilight upon them again. And the Countess, who was now in the room, was talking in her old way to a group of listeners assembled around her.

"Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman says—'There are large questions in this country on which women are as good judges as men, and sometimes better. For instance, questions of temperance, education, free trade, and local government. The possession of the Parliamentary franchise is the only effective way of securing the just claim of women to full and direct share in that social work, where their interests are most deeply concerned, and where their influence and their services would be of the highest public value. The country will become more and more favourable to the enfranchisement of women, Parliament trying to deal with social questions on which women might not only be entitled to vote, but on which their opinion is more essential than men's.'"

"True morality is not of codes, teachers, or books," said Lucius Macnamary. "The right thinking individual, man or woman, will be a law to himself. Nothing brings so much confusion and death into art and morals than the imposing upon one period, one sex, or upon individual souls, the experiences of other people and the other sex."

"What an enormous controversy regarding the Divorce question, nowadays," said the host. "Nothing is better instanced than this. The Italian Liberals, cherishing deep religious feeling and love for the

Catholic Church, supporting their contention, causing the dismal, inglorious failure of the Divorce Bill brought forward by the late Zanardelli Cabinet. Thus acting unconsciously, perhaps unwisely, and betraying ignorance of the main current of popular opinion which, fortunately for all, is not exclusively expressed in sectarian and microscopic conventicles."

"The free trade situation, too," broke in Mr Trelawney, "is still one of peril. In fighting that battle and opposing the taxation of food—"

"The fortress of free trade is not to be carried by storm, Sir Edward," broke in another voice, that of his city friend, Mr Clarice. "The old-fashioned Tory protectionist is one who had lived on the land. He hated Cobden for the same reason that he now hates Mr Chamberlain. Then there is the agricultural protectionist. Mr Chamberlain, some years ago, ridiculed them."

"Free traders are not to be killed? Eh, Sir Edward?" interposed Andrea Malley.

"No, no!" answered the host hotly.

"Protection is supposed to mean taxes on foreign non-colonial meat and corn, is it not?" asked Valerie Trelawney, as if she wished to know something about it.

"Yes! Duty of some kind on everything, articles manufactured abroad which can be obtained at home."

"Victory number one has been scored," said Andrea Malley, "and there is hope for every free importer. The reactionists are discomfited."

"But to return to our first discussion. It is our duty to leave no constituency unfought, no organisation unhelpt," said Sir Edward Ambrose, hotly. "Once beaten at the polls, food taxes will become—perhaps nothing more to be frightened at, but—I do not know much of politics and am probably wrong—than perhaps the dream of the East Anglian farmer."

"Who told you that? Louis Volvois may be a political student, with a grasp for underlying principles. One never knows what one has got in one's midst," remarked Mr Clarice.

"A tariff reformer would call you frankly partisan," said Lucius Macnamary. "But to return. It takes time, Countess, for the general mind to grow accustomed to any new order of things, to any change. But I suppose the day will come when brothers and sisters, men and women, will be working together in the honoured profession of the Law."

"Oh, you think then that Miss Cave is only one of the pioneers a little in advance of her times? Her fate, perhaps, only the usual failure, stepping on to later success?"

"Without doubt! Without envy or rivalry we shall one day find the lady-barrister, now considered here an impossibility, an established and perhaps a most popular and useful member of the community," remarked Lucius, emphatically.

"And women, at last, no longer competitors of man! but imbued with impelling and justifiable efforts of emancipation without losing charm of sex, and without rivalry with the other sex, retreating always to the depth of the heart, a region man is unable to penetrate," said the hostess, who had come into the room unawares. "Woman, at last, dealing with equal rights, without losing her womanhood. Her way won to the same rank as man. But, in my opinion, only on subjects and for causes which concern woman herself. Subjects and causes in which her strength and opinion is most needed, and must be better than man's, subjects that lie nearest to her heart." Lady Ambrose had a sweetly sympathetic voice. "Men, at last, instead of closing any avenue, will give to women-workers every opportunity and help which, indeed, in nearly every other case but the Law they are now doing."

"And yet, however much I agree, taking the whole world on an average, dear Countess," said Valerie Trelawney, abruptly, "women *are* inferior to men in intellect. Now, for this I shall get the whole feminine world down upon me—you, first—for a certainty. But, still I will say it, this makes it impossible for her to compete with man in the ordinary callings. This is my opinion."

"Mrs Trelawney, you are daring, but perhaps you are right," said Louis Volvois, joining in.

"No, no!" began the Countess. "A preposterous insinuation, Valerie—"

"Remember, Countess, I said 'on an average.' But there are some other women, certainly, who are superior in intellectual power, immensely superior, Mrs Besant, for instance, with her marvellous brain and great intellect in this century, and there are other instances. And when women now show such power, such brains, such intellect as hers, why should women be refused, of all professions, that of the Law?"

"Ah! Now, you are on the right lines again," said the Countess.

"Now, when in these days new laws concerning women in their dearest interests, such as Marriage, Divorce, and the custody of children, are so much needed, men's present laws being unable to execute real Justice," said the hostess.

"In the case of Miss Cave being refused to practise at the bar, it was because—a most futile and reactionary line of argument is man's—it had never been done before!"

"What a justifiable argument for refusal," laughed Valerie Trelawney, glancing in triumph at Lucius Macnamary and all the other men.

"Males!" ejaculated the Countess, "males only were to be admitted, because as a barrister a woman's personality would intrude, becoming, perhaps, more

insistent than her arguments. And as you say—er—man's argument, because she had never been admitted before."

"No avenues of livelihood should be closed to women," said Sir Edward Ambrose, seriously, "in this, the twentieth century, if it is going to be a century of Progress and 'A new Reformation' inducing the one right order—harmony of the world."

"They said, in addition, that it might happen that a case would be won by some theatrical exhibition or attractiveness of appearance rather than strength of logic," said Lady Ambrose, in her charming, firm, but quiet way.

"Then came, of course, the usual clamour of tongues and pens against emancipated women. Same old argument. Women should only become mothers, be deferred to by man as being—er—weaker, and of course dependent and more gracious. To be won, of course, rather than beaten, and not to attempt to take an equal part in the brutal realities of men's fierce struggle, not to be left behind in the fight of the survival of the fittest," argued Valerie Trelawney.

"Yes," remarked the hostess again, "that is all very sweet. But in these days, first comes the question men themselves consider the preliminary one in their own lives—the necessity to live!"

"Romance, graciousness, womanliness and motherhood are all very well, when all men can keep the women in such a position suited for such conditions. But when they cannot, they should open all professions to women, to prevent that horrible unholy maladjustment—Marriage for a livelihood. All members of a community, in order to live, must either work or be worked for unless work in the past has provided them with sufficient money to make work unnecessary, and provided they have not been robbed of it in some way or other, or placed at

some disadvantage in business or financial affairs, as most women have been by men, that is, unless they inherit a fortune. In England, not all women can be worked for by men, that is—er—generally speaking, a man only works for one woman, his wife. Thus an increasing number of women, owing to the existing order of things, must work. And because this necessity arises, if men have real good feeling towards the sex, to whom, in spite of all their superior cleverness, they happen to be indebted for their birth, and because it is weaker and on the average inferior, they will not go on talking the usual stuff about emancipation, or the usual stuff about wives and mothers and femininity, but will open all professions and give women every opportunity possible."

"And which, dear Countess," said Valerie Trelawney, "they are doing in almost every case but this one."

"Well, Mrs Trelawney, I fear you do not know the world outside," said the Countess.

"The position is summed in one word—co-operation," said Mrs Trelawney, appealing to all around. "That is what is needed. Let us change the subject. Don't you think the Irish mind is suffering from considerable derangement! Let us try now and dry the eyes of 'dear weeping Erin' for a change."

"Oh! some one says now, that the problem of Ireland is not one of finance, but of character," said Lucius Macnamary.

"And I believe you are right," said Sir Edward.

"But the dawn has arisen. And now Irishmen must be ready with the constructive scheme," joined in Louis Volvois, very earnestly.

"The Irish question is not only the English political relation to Ireland. Those of us who take a new view of Ireland need not be divided on the question of Home Rule. That has now

become a secondary question," asserted the host, forcefully.

"The three great Ideals of Ireland, are, I believe, Celticism, Economic Prosperity and Religion," said Lucius Macnamary.

"But they are in their essence all mutually antagonistic, I believe."

"Yes," answered Lady Ambrose, her intelligent face becoming slightly flushed.

"Why?"

"The religious spirit is at a stand-still without educative development, and Celticism is the essence of Paganism, is it not?"

"No matter," contradicted the good host. "Ireland will one day become a prosperous country of mills and factories. Only courage and hopefulness now required!"

"But the ascendancy of the clergy, some say, saps all strength of will and purpose."

"Can this be true?" asked Valerie Trelawney. She had great confidence in Sir Edward Ambrose's opinions.

"Their religion turns people's thoughts to a future life, does it not. Perhaps a little to the insignificance of this."

"But then there is again, do not forget, the gross bigotry of Protestant Ireland," remarked Lucius Macnamary.

"Oh, say no more. Believe me, in spite of all this, the economic problem of Ireland is of a rural character," exclaimed Sir Edward, emphatically. "With her armour on, her sad dreams of the past over, a brilliant future is hers."

They stayed on in the library and chatted, first discussing one subject, then another following quickly. All happy, and apparently enjoying each other's society, all free, easy, simple and natural, There was no stiffness, no dulness, no cut and dried laws

of propriety. And at last they all went to dress and the rooms were again left empty and silent.

And so the day wore on and on.

In the evening it was to be one of the hostess's carefully-arranged dinner-parties.

A few hours later there was a very bright scene. Piles of pale pink peonies, in the dining-room, were massed in the centre of the huge table, surrounded by trailing smilax. Sparkling jewels glittered around upon the fair necks and the various coloured frocks of their owners. All sumptuous colour schemes—the owners, and the frocks—many without even as much as the shelter of a sleeve to laugh in. Above the dresses seemed to be more living pink peonies, or rather the faces of the womenkind, their necks, white, some of them, as the trackless melting snow. Beauty, to suit all tastes, in a *décolleté* and beaming state. There were new men, with enormous City incomes, derived from crushing others down, and from goodness knows where. Not dishonest men, or thieves, but only large company promoters! Some of them, having bought mansions, had settled there. New City men, possessing new titles and old estates, mad upon getting into Society, forgetting first to educate themselves, men, to whom the science of self-culture was unknown. One or two very good-looking Indian gentlemen. One, just dark only, a great prince, a Maharajah, most strangely handsome in a superb Indian dress, his star-like living jewels trying in vain to rival the brilliancy of his wonderfully fascinating black eyes. Women, with much unnecessary flesh, the unintelligent, uneducated wives of some of the City men, with 1840 shoulders, their figures the result of too big and fashionable dinners. Some charming women, too, in their thirties, with their smart, surface “parrot” chatter and phrases caught from others, or from journals, and the giddy world

around them. Clever, witty women—age—in that case—age of no importance at all—all clothed in their exquisite *didmante* millinery “nothings.” Some sparkling with amusing chatter, one or two with really lively quips and cranks, making the staccato patter of clever tongues, and brilliant, for sheer joy in themselves and their chiffons, some bubbling over with pretty baby-babble, the very effervescence of delight in their own beauty and charms, and the mere sensuous joy of living and existing.

But alas, many of them women whose only object in life was to clothe their persons in such a manner that would dazzle others, making women less well gowned envious and men slightly crazy, mad, or that is, perhaps, forgetful for the moment of everything else in life but the particular woman, in the particular frock! Nearly all passionate, gaily-dressed lies, with searching, gimlet, deceitful, wicked eyes.

Now in this twentieth century, eating has become the fashionable amusement of all, *pour passer le temps*. The utter extravagance of our dinners would astonish an ancient Roman feast. Waiters quickly turned each tiny wineglass to a ruby or a topaz, with the liquid colour of champagne or Bourgogne. The men and women, civilisation’s latest work, clothed and housed prodigally, dowered with what is called the extreme of sensuous refinement, making Life a festival, continued to eat and drink and talk, forgetful of the Past, heedless of the Future, eloquent of the Present of living.

Half-past ten found some of the guests again in the shaded library, listening to the latest political speech, through the gramophone, in the delightfully roomy hall, with its view of the staircase in monochrome, where strains of refined music in the gallery above came down to them, to some in sound, to some in colour too. In the conservatory other guests were chatting; and in the drawing-room or

in the card-room, playing bridge, roulette and baccarat.

The Countess was soon surrounded by a party discussing thought-reading and her favourite subject, "spiritualism." The people of this ultra-fashionable set seemed to exist upon parties—always in parties—pay parties, restaurant parties, play parties, theatre parties, and a hundred other parties, impossible to remember in a moment, the order of their lives.

A few people were talking around the hostess. One of them had a story of an ancient piece of jewellery, and from that others had something to say on the subject, a pretty legend to tell, or a design to show. They implored the hostess to show them the curious heirlooms. Reluctantly, she consented at last—for she remembered a curious legend, a weird superstition attached to the ruby necklace—which said if it was not kept in a proper atmosphere, when not being worn, curious events would follow—fetching with her own hands an antique cabinet, heavily inlaid with jewels. It had fifty tiny drawers, each with a separate golden padlock and jewelled key. The principal one she took from her neck, where it had hung hitherto for years on a chain, fitting a secret drawer, from which she took some rare jewels, and among them the ruby necklace, flashing with blood-red beams of light.

"'Tis without flaw and blemish, and gloweth like the carbuncle that lighteth the hall of the Soldan of Babylon!" exclaimed Louis Volvois.

Doris, everlastingly buoyant, of course, had her own little group of men around her, some women too, who found her absurd nonsense and good spirits particularly reviving.

"It indeed doth remind me of tales of Eastern lands," said she, holding it up, while all the guests gazed with an intensity of admiration they found difficult to suppress.

"I have just been listening to dear Countess Hysterics," she said to her friend, Louis Volvois, ten minutes afterwards, when the jewels had gone, "and already I feel I have never moved since I was ten. 'Age,' she says, 'in these days, is purely a matter of temperament. You can be any age you like, it depends entirely upon your mind.' I'm going back to short frocks to-morrow. I think I am most unsuitably clothed for my age. Don't you? I am ten, you see. You all hear me, and so ten I intend to remain, if my thoughts really have anything to do with the matter, as the latest psychological Science has proved. I am not sure what she is, something between a Christian Scientist, a zoologist, an embryologist, a botanist, a morphologist, a faith-healer, sociologist, Darwinian, spiritualist, Weismannian, and many more it would be wearisome to enumerate. But all this *mêlée* is supposed, of course, to represent Science with a big, big S. Everything is Science nowadays, so the Countess guide, says. But as I am only a walking 'Ruffs' I really don't know if I dare mention the word Science."

"Don't laugh, Miss O'Carroll, there is more in the Countess's remarks than most people imagine," said a serious voice.

"Another of the things which Science will eventually explain, I suppose," laughed Doris. "Dear me, Science will eventually have a long-standing account against it by the next century. I would sooner believe a camel flew or an elephant laid an egg. Well, I am only hoping I shall not think I am a centenarian, for, according to the Countess's theory, if I think so, I shall be one—grow exactly like one, too. Isn't that the idea? Who you are, and what you are, depends upon your mind, your thoughts. And this, she says, is as sure—sure as—what—well, as sure as a woman responding to the humour of the

man she loves," she added, raising an audacious little face up to Louis Volvois.

"If you retain your present spirits," he returned, "you certainly never will grow old. It is true, quite true."

"The envious triumph of Science is illustrated by some recent newspapers—the majestic, the immutable, the only wise regent of truth," she said sarcastically.

"Not theirs the weakness of the theologians or metaphysicians, or even theosophists! Theirs a sort of theological battlefield, pointing to the inferiority of all others with scorn, yet establishing, in my opinion, more uncertainty, obscurity, dissension and fallacy than any," remarked Louis Volvois.

"Oh, I'm tired of it all! I get mixed. I—I'm beginning to wonder seriously who I really am, where I was born. I suppose this accounts for so many women looking younger than their daughters."

She was silent for a moment, as if meditating.

"In one thing, I suppose I am singularly fortunate above most modern girls. I have not a frisky mamma, attired in baby-blue. My mamma is quite of the reminiscent type and an angel! Perhaps that is why I am so much the reverse. All other girls' mammas of the frisky type now are coquettes at eighty, with frocks beyond anything in the way of frocks and other costumes of a cobweb kind, ever seen before. In which case, I suppose, the daughters become the angels. I never did like that *rôle*, although I never did agree quite with the wholesale slaughter of a woman's individuality to her children, which has been ever one of the world's greatest abominations. There is always the happy medium. Now darling mamma was brought up to think it right and proper she should lose her individuality entirely, and become a sort of side-light to her selfish children and her husband; her literature, only that on cooking, and on how to make selfish husbands happy. And yet

whenever I hear the Countess holding forth upon age being simply the result of a diseased mind, purely a matter of temperament, I feel thankful my mamma is not fashionable, not born in the twentieth century, and not blessed with perennial youth. I am sure I should find it extremely awkward doing chaperon to her, selecting what fashionable novels she might read, for instance, and her white muslin frocks."

Doris's voice was always to be heard when there was a lull in the conversation, and everyone generally then listened good-naturedly to her silly prattle, murmuring, "Oh, Doris again!"

It was her little way when noticing this, to "blaze" out with some worse absurdity, pretending to be quite unaware that she was entertaining anyone else but the person to whom she was pouring out such "red-hot confidences."

She was not at all typical of women who are in any way intellectually emancipated.

"By the way, did I tell you about the queer person I met in London last month?"

"Do we not meet odd people in London every moment of our lives? How can you expect us to remember?" pleaded Louis Volvois.

"I stand corrected, but you should have added, 'If we look for them.' Most people never see them. You rarely make new acquaintances and certainly not promiscuous ones, as I do, but I am a Bohemian, and study life, so people excuse me everything. In my secret category are princesses of royal blood, down to music-hall *artistes* and sewing-girls. The two latter I find most amusing. But the other day I was introduced to a curious lady. She was fair, very stout—now, by this, I do not mean the ordinary amount—it is the sort of thing her tailor has to walk around."

"Doris, you are incorrigible!" remarked Lady Violet.

"She was a singer, and the same size around as the Darlington oak, which has been growing and expanding for three centuries. The bulk of the oak—and of madam—I leave to your fertile imaginations. But a very pretty face and lovely blue eyes, when you can catch sight of them from their bed of surrounding fat. Well, this lady is dressed by D——," continued Doris, "and always has little dreams of toques. It doesn't in the least matter what sort of a head you happen to have, if you are a woman now, and it is crowned by a really successful toque. That is everything. See what a state of civilisation we women have reached in the twentieth century. Mind, intellect, face, age, everything, sinks into insignificance before a pretty French toque. Now this lady begins in this way. 'I hear you say funny things sometimes, my dear. Do come and dine with me.' I felt most embarrassed. 'Oh, please,' I returned, 'do not give me the most undeserved credit of ever saying droll things. I have merely a faculty for keen observation, not for invention at all, I assure you. I merely observe, and then are born what you call the funny things. I am always observing. In fact, I am observing now.'" Doris paused, and then went on again. "However, in spite of this, I dined with her. Just our two selves at a fashionable hotel, from where I watched the *faits et gestes* of passers-by. This makes an excellent accompaniment to dinner, I find. Oh, the magnums of champagne and other evil liquids. Then I understood the superfluity of fat. I was dining with a *gourmet*. One who called the twentieth-century food, with its good flour tortured into thousands of wicked forms, and its misnamed wines—insipid. She ordered oysters, *à la béchamel*, grained chicken gumbo, terrapin and canvas-back ducks, all no epicure could sneer at. But also a *gourmet* who is received in a way for her great generosity and the enormous good she does for the

country. She gained her notoriety and peculiar position by giving away enormously to the dear soldiers in the time of war. Oh, not notepaper, garters, blacklead pencils or plum puddings, but good substantial sums of money to their widows and children. Since then she has been on the edge of Society. I like the edge. One meets such queer people there, and they are so over-abundantly kind to one. As for money, even if the edge proves a sharp one for some, it simply doesn't count. They have the millions, and they simply throw them at you—except some millionaires I know, who spend their time putting shilling brands on their fourpenny cigars; absolutely living for no other purpose than to make a display and impress people. Money never did stay long enough with me to make any impression, it just rolls off and never leaves a single dirty mark. Thank goodness! for I hate the mark of dirty money, it clings and stains one so. 'I should like to know your husband,' I said suddenly, by way of changing the conversation. I always do like to know the husbands of people 'on the edge.' They are usually so kind, so useful too, to put a pony on occasionally. It's like dipping one's hands into the Bank of England. Oh, that's not a fair description; sending around a waggon would be better. But more often than not, you don't see the—er—husbands, they're kept in the background—on the edge. It's very difficult to find 'em, so I rather enjoy investigations as regards the—husbands. It gets thrilling, you get such surprises! You see, sometimes, they're somebody else's; often they're with somebody else, then, if you are discreet, you never broach the subject again, and sometimes they really are theirs, but are not presentable, and you wonder whom on earth they remind you of. Then you suddenly remember a dear old friend, Isaac, a perfectly sweet and kind Jew, to whom you once

took some jewels ; or else they're the type who look over your heads all the time, thinking of likely specs in the City. Not interesting, those sort of husbands. But, dear me, more often than not, in looking for one you'll find—er—perhaps three, or five. I once found ten. Then—well, then, I wrote a little book, by the way, and gave it a grand title. It was called '*The Marchioness of Hooligan, or, a History of Surprises.*' It went very well at first as a shilling-shocker, then I turned it into a little sixpenny paper-covered novel, and it sold still remarkably well to an American company to turn into an advertisement for some strength-giving food for babies. Well, then, your new acquaintance, if a subscriber to Mudie's, begins to think it's getting time to drop you before you learn more—that is, of course, if your mamma hasn't had a shock previously, and put her foot down and made you drop her. Oh, I've gained much experience of life by merely studying husbands. The next time, to your amazement, she tries to look unaware of your existence. Well, that's the funniest thing of all, because she does it so badly. You should see me when I'm looking unaware of people's existence, you really would think I was a blue-eyed saint from Heaven, with a far-away, dreamy look in my eyes, dreaming of fleecy clouds and other things.—Lucius, how dare you interrupt! I didn't say 'fleecing,' I said fleecy clouds. But madam on the edge, you should see her, all blushes and consciousness—it's a pantomime! In the case of my new acquaintance, I said after dinner, 'Yes, do you know, it really would give me pleasure to meet your husband!' 'My husband!' she exclaimed in astonishment, 'oh—er—yes, I had forgotten. Yes, my dear, you must come to meet him one day.' Then as an afterthought she added, 'Yes, my dear good husband was in the Navy; but for years he has been a confirmed invalid, and doesn't go much in Society now.' I have since

learned the biography of that hubby. He began life as a ferry-man—don't see any connection, do you, Lucius? Then he emigrated, invented some little patent automatic machine, made the usual pile. Oh, you can guess the rest. Now you know why I always laugh when I hear of anyone being in the Navy. I begin, 'Oh, yes, I once knew a little ferry-man who had a boat.' Then I laugh. Captain Brownley thought I meant to insult him the other day, and described me in his superior way, through an eyeglass, as a very mad, hysterical 'g-u-r-r-l.'"

Doris stopped for fully three minutes to take breath, gasped a little, then went on again.

"I made another of these sort of millionaire acquaintances the other day, but I'm not sure if he will prove interesting. You see millionaires are really quite cheap and so vulgar nowadays. They're so plentiful. Quite ordinary people die nowadays and leave three or four millions, so, of course, the possessor of one is a mere sardine among salmon. But my latest is a basket-man, who has conceived a notion he would like to be in Society, 'just for the fun of the thing,' he says. Whereupon, being a widower, and contemplating a lively time, he set himself to marry off his only daughter to his friend the millionaire-aerated-bread-company-man, whose surname was Smith. His Christian name was Turniville—isn't it like turnip-field? Anyway, they are now 'Mr and Mrs Turniville-Smythe, of Smythelands,' and all relations of the 'Penny-in-the-Slot-Automatic-Millionaire-of-New-York,' and she is the sister of the Chicago-millionaire-before-mentioned—in-the-small-way-of-business, cheap scent combined with blacking. They have reeking motor cars, fur coats, Rothschild cigars and—"

"But the American widower? you have forgotten. What happens? Doris, your brain is too active."

"Oh, there's nothing to tell yet. You see, I am

cultivating him. He is coming to dinner and the cotillion afterwards."

"So his history has not begun, poor wretched man!" returned Lucius, with dialectic dryness. "It is to be hoped he will not end like the young man with £500,000, who now has—sixpence. But are you not afraid your coarse millionaire basket-man will shock you?"

"Oh, dear me, no. I assure you, he has already arrived too, and is so popular. You see he has a delightful way of accepting I.O.U.'s as tangible assets, a unique characteristic Society adores. Have no fears for me, I belong to a set that nothing shocks. Believe me, it is only the good middle-class mind that is really shocked at anything nowadays. We consider it so plebeian. Nothing shocks us; not even automatic millionaires. You see we are all philosophical, we utilise everything. This is true Economy. If ever I cultivate middle-class dowdiness, then, and then only, expect me to be shocked. There, am I not as philosophical as a jelly-fish?"

Doris knew that no one was listening to her now except Louis Volvois and Lucius Macnamary, who were sitting near her, and in a lifeless way joining in with her nonsense. Louis always encouraged her to rattle on. In spite of her ridiculous habit of gliding from one absurdity to another, he saw the true nature of the girl—understood her, and was very much in love with her—that is, as much in love as people of the twentieth century allow themselves to be.

"My dear Doris, you rattle on and on as relentlessly as did the war in South Africa. I will leave you to Louis. He is of a nature that adores it," interposed Lucius, personal to the verge of impertinence, as men who dabble in politics have a knack of becoming. "I am going because I can see he has been longing for my departure for some time."

"You are always so silent," said Doris, after they

had been alone some moments, "that I am forced to keep the ball rolling. It is too bad to leave all to me."

Still he was silent.

"Have you nothing to say?"

"I have said everything to you that I intend to. And you will not listen."

Now there was silence.

"I am going down to what do you call the place to interview your father next week."

"Papa!" shrieked Doris. "Dear twittering papa! Oh, you need not attempt to say anything to papa concerning me. I shall dispose of myself exactly as I choose. All that sort of thing is a century behind the times. And — oh, you do not know papa!"

Doris smiled significantly.

"No, but I intend to, almost immediately. True love, and at the same time honourable love, my dear, is no longer expected to be silent. It immediately proclaims itself loudly in the parental domicile. That is the line laid down in the new century for all honourable lovers."

"Oh, well. Then I must tell you about papa. Poor old dear Tendertoos! I am always endeavouring to get him to treat life as a joke. My little sister came home from school a month ago, and after a great deal of trouble I persuaded him to take us to Paris. This, by the way, is to give you an idea what the darling is like. Poor, dear, dear Tender-toos! Before we started, he began asking all his old fossil friends as to the sort of places a man could now take his young daughters to, for a little fun after dinner. 'Because, you know,' he said, 'of course you can no longer take girls to the theatres, even in London. You might as well take them to the Moul' — Oh, dear, I forget the name, but perhaps it is just as well to leave it out, as it never was meant for

my ears. But how I laughed at his idea of planning out our visit to 'gay Páree!' However, at last I inveigled him there. First, he insisted upon the British Embassy, where we encountered a wonderful *mélange* of all that calls itself English—that exact brand of atrocity that leaves its card at the Lodge in the Faubourg St Honoré. Women, looking in Paris like penwipers; knights' wives in England, looking there like charwomen. It is difficult to describe them. Popsey, my little sister, fresh from school, said they appeared to her much more suitable to be in England as shop assistants in large Compound Funeral Departments, or to remain at home awaiting the Brixton 'bus, than to be in the centre of all that was so delightful, artistic, and brilliant, in the centre of the world of culture, art, science, and amusement.

"Then I promptly took Papa to one of the very smartest clubs, where gambling is rampant. After, to a wonderful restaurant, where, for the sake of meeting everyone—and a few more, you pay a miraculous price for a cup of chocolate or an ice—and as for a mere biscuit you could almost buy a pretty new hat for what they charge for a wafer. It was rather awkward for me, for papa had just accomplished an appetite, and I, too, am the soul of economy. However, the next day I gave in to him, and let him take me about. '*La fin d'une gaieté!*' he exclaimed, '*La fin d'une gaieté!*' groaning all the time over his own lost Paris, which rather opened my eyes to darling Tendertoës's past history. But of course he suggested a picture gallery for us. Of course, I say, because did you ever know a dear papa old Tendertoës who didn't suggest a picture gallery as a way of improving the mind of his olive branches? Here, upon closely questioning him, he acknowledged to me that Paris was less hilariously gay than it was thirty years ago, when he was a young

man, with its rollicking *bals masqués*, and when the English all boasted of going there to see something *un peu shocking*. But more he would not divulge.

"The principal picture was the latest sensation, and this is a faithful description of it, Louis. Take half a bucket full of vermillion paint, pour on to a large canvas in one splash—like dough, don't you know. This is known in Paris as the great master touch, the exact impressionism, with its arbitrary criteria, by which incompetence passes for genius. Put above it a little streak of blue—the sky. Another master touch, dear Louis! Underneath add a label, 'The Garden of Sleep in Summer,' with apologies to 'Isidore de Lara.' It was indeed fortunate it was written plainly, and there was a label. Need I explain? Well! the red paint was 'The Garden of Sleep'—for poppies, you know, the streak—Summer.

"The true artist," said papa, "is driven to his work by an overwhelming Art impulse! First, he conceives some poetical conception from within. He is then swayed by an Art impulse from without. Then some poetical conception from—er—above; he is then swayed by another Art impulse from—'Below,' I interrupted, as I thought it was getting quite time for lunch. After lunch, papa seemed to have developed a depraved taste for 'airy trifling,' for had I not dragged him to a party, I think he would have discovered an affinity in a little girl with a squint and snub nose, which was really too brilliant and imaginative, and of course shows great power of concentration—er—and all that. Now I say I have tact, and so do you. But papa says I have lots of brutal, clumsy, played-out artifices for interrupting 'the course of true love.'" She now paused to take breath in her usual fashion.

"You see, Doris," interrupted Louis, "Paris is a delightful city of hilarity. Good spirits seem to be

breathed in with the atmosphere. London soil and fogs are not conducive to the propagation of the Grand Passions, so you must make allowances for your dear papa."

"But, really, I don't think that applies," returned mischievous Doris. "This was in a picture gallery and the lady was on canvas. Didn't I say so?"

"Was she very handsome?" asked Louis, smiling.

"Oh! so handsome. Enough to make an artist writhe in his grave. But you know the vagaries of our Impressionists. It must be as Nature impresses them, and should be a question of the occultist and psychologist, and not the art critic."

"Who painted it?"

"Oh! I forget. Sort of creature who made his name painting sisters of the 'Venus of Milo,' taking their baths, clumsy misshapen creatures, but superbly fat. The painting world in Paris simply revels in plumpness. I think papa calls it—er—a school. He describes them as 'beautiful, golden-haired Naiads, gambolling' in the sun. 'The Venetian school of robust beauty,' I believe. But then he is a connoisseur, and seems to know all about that sort of thing. I never did, and I call it pure vulgar, unnecessary fat. His next love affair?—Oh! He then grew attracted towards a lady of the ballet in—er—er—rather abbreviated garments. Papa said she was swathed in a—melody. Ah, but that ended in a romantic story-book thing I am reserving for a novel. Then there was 'Dimples,' another of papa's golden-haired—impossibilities, I call them, and a much more appropriate description. She carried programmes. And another—an 'Ouida-esque, Mothite' sort of creature—but no more disclosures. I took him home at last, and gave him some of the Sunday literature of his childhood, where he now wears the same sort of spiritless ex-

pression as of a young lady eating out her heart in a country vicarage."

Here Doris looked up suddenly, pretended to start as if she had been unaware she was entertaining the little group that had assembled around her. She glanced at Louis, then she smiled in a very childish, innocent manner, and said, "That's papa! Now, I think I have given you a very faithful description. You will need no introduction when you go to 'Llan, Llan, double ss, LLLL, double ss, double ll—Wales.' The little village they call the Englishman's jaw-breaker."

"Anyway, a decided improvement, I should think, from the ill-health of Botticelli's ideals. I admire your father's taste, Doris dear, but I like to stay at home. I like Burne-Jones who goes to the primitives for inspiration, or Mr Whistler catching an echo from the art of Japan."

It was Valerie who spoke. As she was about to pass she heard the end of Doris's nonsense. She was attired in a dress that reminded one of the far-off days of Romney.

"How long have you been listening to me? I thought you were all engrossed playing cards. Why are you here?" exclaimed Doris.

"I was. I also will tell you a little story. There is a certain Duchess you know so well. She is a great card-player. In the middle of the game she has a neat way of nipping up bank-notes between her first finger and thumb. 'May I?—Thanks awfully. So kind,' she says absently, going on immediately with her game, 'Come and dine with me, dear, to-morrow. Engaged? So sorry. Well, run down to D——.' Of course, if you happen to be simple you'll smile sweetly, feel flattered, and say, 'delighted,' and ignore your heap of notes vanishing. But if you are not, you'll say, 'Pardon me. That's—er—mine!' and go on with your game. I

have just finished another game," said Valerie, naively.

They all laughed. Lucius, who had returned, handed her another chair, then sat in one himself. Not one had failed to see the point of that story, for they knew the guest of whom she spoke.

"Modern. Only modern!" he murmured.

"Ah, but that is only her little weakness," continued Valerie. "She has so many good points. One of them a very commendable and old-fashioned habit of going everywhere with her own husband! Did anyone ever hear of such a proceeding in these enlightened, bright, deep-thinking days? Now when I go anywhere with my own husband I take two bottles of sal-volatile and return in a hansom a shattered wreck. A friend of mine, who has short hair and dresses like a man, held a discourse to women the other day, at the newest of ladies' (?) clubs, situated in St James Street, and recently opened by a dignitary of the Church. The subject was:—'Husbands.' She said: 'There are many different species of this strange, primitive animal, but principally they may be divided into two distinct classes—the *brute* husband and the *victim* husband.'"

"Her own, of course, belonged to the first class—the 'brute' species," interposed Lucius.

"Oh, naturally! How very dull of you. Was he not her *husband*?"

"Ah, I see," returned Lucius, smiling. He knew now she was only in fun. It seemed to him no one said anything they meant here.

"Continuing her address, my friend, the lecturer, said: 'Under the first class come our own husbands, very curious creatures, in whose composition there is an old-fashioned and rooted conviction that he is lord and master. A sort of roaring British lion, with a weird habit of trailing after his own wife, trying to assert immense authority, under the

delusion it adds to his dignity. Under the second class—all other women's 'good-looking husbands.' A 'victim' husband is one generally in the position of a worm that hath not turned."

"Is there not one man left in all the world brave enough to hold a discourse on 'Women?'" asked Lucius—"Wives? "

"Will you not try?" Valerie asked, looking at him with laughing eyes.

"Yes," he answered, "if you will give me the keynote."

"Oh, certainly. Let me see. Well, women can be divided into two distinct classes. First, the obedient mechanical mouse, whose attitude is answerable for all the injustice, cruelty and tragedy to which the lives of all women have been exposed up to the present, and the sort men admire most until they are old, and in whom, manlike, they see all feminine excellence—this is a path I have wandered from, by the way—But now go on, I have given you the keynote."

But at that moment they were joined by the hostess.

"I consider myself lucky," said Lady Ambrose to them all. "I have secured after difficulty the most noted cotillion dancer for to-morrow night, and now I know my evening will be a success. He is a wonderful man, a man of surprises from beginning to end. Even I have not the remotest idea what is coming. I leave all to him and enjoy the pleasure of anticipation, the joy of surprise, like a child."

"And so we are all to feel children again to-morrow night," said Lucius. "I am sure it is easy to be young again when stopping in your house, my sweet hostess. All that you have planned for our amusement is miraculous for one small pretty, little head like yours."

"Your cotillion leader is that delightful Frenchman you met in Paris, is he not?" remarked Valerie. "He

bounces in upon one like a good-looking, young Santa Claus, with his pockets bulging with presents for each—such unique things too. Is it possible you can resist asking him to show you all the delightful things he has brought from Paris?"

"Ah, that would spoil the fun," returned Lady Ambrose. "He designs everything himself. He is an artist. His dance a play. He has mistaken his vocation, he should have been an actor and done his own stage-managing."

"I know, and as well as all this he speaks with a pure accent and has such delightfully natural gallantry. He pervades everyone with his own French spirit of light-hearted gaiety," said Valerie. "People all say his very presence surcharges one with new life, he seems vibrating with good cheer and energy. We dance about with him like a lot of happy children let loose from school. Oh, you clever woman. You have learnt that no house-party is perfect without a cotillion, and M. Dersuage makes one truly forget we are in sober England. There is no *gauche* shyness. How funny they used to be when the women were the only ones who knew much of the dance."

"We are all wild with longing to see your ballroom, Lady Ambrose. It has been shut up for a week and we have only heard suspicious hammerings, seen equally mysterious gentlemen making some mysterious arrangements. I fancy, dear hostess, our Countess Hysterics has another attack of enthusiasm on some subject or another. Her little *séance* is over, and she seems to be holding forth earnestly, dear thing. Shall we go and hear her."

But at that moment she came towards them, with a little book in her hands, nicely bound in white vellum with gold letters.

"I have been reading a book a man wrote about women. It will not do to mention the name. The

first chapter is called 'The Marriage State.' Listen: 'Before accepting the honoured state wife,' writes the man, 'the woman is wise who makes an intelligent and honest endeavour to realise the serious import of marriage and maternity. To permit the excitement of the approaching wedding to bound the horizon of her mind is foolish, if she has not won the grace, the knowledge and the patience, necessary to meet these new conditions,' and so on.—My darling Mary, where did you get that book?" said the Countess, seriously. "All those books are written by a man, I believe, without the imagination to feel the suffering of other human creatures. Just the ordinary man who thinks of woman, not exactly as an intelligent, human being, a soul in a world of souls, all the same spirits in the form of men and women. A man can never see beyond his own point of view. To him a woman is not, and never will be anything, but simply a pretty dainty lump of flesh and blood to administer to his humours and pleasure. It is time the other side is considered a little, and books written by priests, beginning—'Before man accepts the honoured state of husband,' and so on. No doubt these ideas were permissible among the Turks before they became broader and kinder to the other half of the human race to which they owe their existence, in the days when by mere physical strength they made women subordinate, and cherished 'the domestic ideal' above all others. When women, wine and food were all placed on about the same level. But among intelligent, cultured men and women—preposterous! It is only woman who should express views regarding maternity. We want a readjustment of sex ethics, a readjustment of the marriage institution, but there's much to learn before that becomes perfect on either side, and they must all be inspired to sell their brains instead of their bodies in the marriage market."

People were all silent. To many it was still a delicate subject.

Without waiting for an answer, she walked out of the room.

"Mary," said Sir Edward Ambrose, "I have watched the face of the good Countess Eulalia Festetics, and I should say she was not exactly insane, yet a person the great doctors would describe as suffering from imperative ideas — yes, very imperative ideas. And indeed, half of humanity is afflicted now in this way ; the other half have another form of insanity—real madness."

CHAPTER V

"NO MAN IS WISE—EXCEPT A FOOL"

"We each have our own way of learning the Law."

THE dazzling ballroom was still empty at half-past nine o'clock on the following evening, for the hostess and her guests had scarcely finished dinner.

The groundwork of the room was principally a pure white scheme, with the exception of the opalescent blue clouds, birds, arrayed in marvellous plumes, butterflies, white and black, painted boldly on the ivory satin panels in the walls. Between each of these panels were carved white pillars, Roman in style and outline. The ceiling was coloured the deepest, most brilliant, turquoise hue, resembling an Italian sky. The sight of it at once made one dream of picturesque, tanned peasants, by the glaring white roadsides, eating their "polenta" and macaroni, and now with artificial light, exactly like daylight, one almost listened for their musical "Buona sera, Signora." The bells—one could imagine they were those tied to the dun-coloured oxen drawing produce from the neighbouring "poderi." The "carri," loaded with baskets of grapes and huge pumpkin-shaped "guccli," previously growing in the maize fields. Everything seemed to transport one to Italy. Hung in long drooping festoons, their loops reaching from the ceiling to the dado formed by the white wood-work, were delicious trails of red and white roses, their ends tied about three inches from the ceiling with the palest sea-green and white ribbons, falling like

miniature waterfalls, in long loops and ends between. Exactly in the centre of the room stood an exquisite white carriage, modelled after one of Napoleon's still at Versailles. The inside was lined with blue velvet, the outside was white enamel, but crammed with great purple bunches of Neapolitan violets, fastened together with pale lemon ribbons, lilies-of-the-valley and masses of white lilac all arranged to form curious devices when viewed at a little distance.

At last the hostess entered the room, looking wonderfully handsome, an ideal chatelaine, in her sweeping amber garments with a bandeau of rubies around her head and a necklace of the same fiery jewels at her neck.

Soon the guests began to arrive, half startled by the lovely scene that broke upon their vision. Some by the marble staircase, cold and icy to the touch, or the mirrored lift that brought them to the ballroom door. Every nook and corner of the whole house was utilised. Electric light ran in hundreds of faceted gems, through blocks of ice, colouring it purple, rose, and delicate green, then wended its way, and found itself again in the heart of unsuspecting flowers, scattered about with the premeditated carelessness of an artist's hand, ending now and then 'midst the sheltering ferns and plants. Above the head at intervals were parterres of flowers. From the lavish display of blossoms in their fullest perfection, one soon forgot that it was Art, easily fancying instead that it was Nature frolicking to her heart's content in a wild joyous freak with her children. The musicians commenced to play a wondrous waltz. At last the dancing began; not lifeless and inane, but full of real vigorous vivacity, breaking occasionally into giddy merry scrambles, dancing that became indeed the soul of light-heartedness and frivolity as the dancers moved with swifter step, rosier cheeks and quicker breath.

One thing showed Lady Ambrose's good breeding. At first glance one noticed an enormous superfluity of men. Wallflowers at her balls were unknown. She scorned such bad arrangements, as carelessness, indicating the lowest possible tone of thought.

"No, no!" she always said. "If one sex has to be cheapened it shall not be my own. In my house men are always cheap."

Very soon nearly one hundred and fifty couples were taking part in the cotillion, and there was movement, change, brilliancy of light, subtlety of scent, and witchery of sound, and everything progressed as automatically and beautifully as in the dear old, old nursery rhyme. "When fire began to burn stick, stick began to boil water," and so on. That good old rhyme, with its underlying inner truth and moral.

While everything in the ballroom was still in full swing, in the smoking-room two men were still lingering, chatting over their cigars.

"My dear fellow, my wife dragged me there. A very exclusive river party of course, but in spite of that everything exceptionally jolly, I assure you—except the ladies—all on the wrong side of forty—so three days were enough for me. They bored me—Oh! how they bored me. Heavens! how I must have bored them! This century is rife with change. It is to be likened to the potato blight."

"How long did you stay?" asked Lucius Macnamary.

"One week. I returned to see dear little Follette. Dear little Follette, the dancer, whose kiss is, they say, like the touch of a rose-leaf, and charms pernicious enough to incite to—bigamy. By the way, no portion of our anatomy suffers more from the strain of late hours than our poor eyes."

They continued to laugh and talk until the end of

it, and the rest of their gossip, perhaps a moralist would say, was not "dry daylight gossip."

It was now ten o'clock. There was a shaded nook in the drawing-room, which was now almost deserted. The "New Yorker," with the purse of Croesus, ten residences, and one generation behind him, the nice American widower who had made his millions through limited liability companies, promoted by men whose lie-a-bility knew no limit, had taken a house to be near Sir Edward and Lady Ambrose, and now sat in this nook with that young lady Doris. He had once seen her in her shooting dress and heard her sing her "Coon" songs to her banjo. She was so different to any of the girls he had ever met before, nearly all exquisitely gowned, pretty, smart, but girls who lived to dress, and so of whom much further description would be superfluous.

Doris was—Doris — exactly the reverse, outwardly untidy but unique. He seemed to find the change singularly refreshing. She possessed enormous attraction for him. Whenever he had a chance he singled her out and drew her aside for a chat. This usually meant sitting in silence, while Doris talked, amusing him with her nonsense, or startling, shocking, surprising him with delightful rapidity every three seconds, but for the time banishing every troublesome thought from the minds of her listener.

"The Englishman nowadays has to make way for the American," she said with a winning smile. "He seems destined to whip the universe. All things have their price nowadays, but real coronets come dear to men—they are only cheap to women, now that they are passed on only to ladies of the variety stage. Blessed will the day be when the American invasion will temper English society. The cultured American woman is the product of generations of hard-working fathers, who have toiled to make her what she is. She has left her creator far behind, and women make

Society. I heard—that is, a little bird told me—that you began, like all Americans, by licking stamps in an office, and those are the sort of energetic men I like. I like Dukes by grace of tradition and history, or of a gamble on the Stock Exchange.

"At your last dinner at the Waldorf Astoria, I heard," she was now saying with her accustomed audacity and lisp, "you had in the centre of the table a sort of miniature skating-rink. It was a ten-thousand-dollar one, and a sort of Belshazzar's repast, so smart it fairly cracked and broke like a thunderbolt on New York Four Hundred. With you, economy is said to sleep, and your life and all Americans one reckless orgie of dollars. The women say that the signing of settlements and domestic cheques would be a mere trifle in your mighty calculations! I hear you think in millions."

He laughed and replied quickly, "Why, you could do that if you tried. Anyone could think in millions, eh? I loathe display of any sort, and that is what you English always expect from my countrymen."

It was true. Wealth had not spoiled this man.

"Then I should say you are a new thing in American millionaires," interrupted Doris, looking at him as if he had been a new waxwork figure of interest in Madame Taussaud's, and she had been a child escaped from her nurse.

He stared. "Well, that may be, young lady," he returned, in a well-bred, level voice. "Yes, they did put a lot of real ice about my room on the occasion of that unavoidable dinner. I like doing things in style—but mind, between that and actual vulgar display, there is a line, Madam—that very few perceive. I'm one of the few."

"And the frocks? I heard—but say?—tell me about the frocks. I heard the women carried their menkind around with them, in the trail of their chiffon flounces."

"Really Madam, I've got a fairly good head for business and for figures, but it don't run to frocks. However, if you'll wait a moment, I'll telephone around to my paper offices and get a few of the lady correspondents sent across by next mail. Then you'll get the real thing."

"Oh! don't trouble, thanks," said Doris. "I see you understand my sex no better than the ordinary male thing. You are really very dull, when I've got myself up like a 'U.S.A.' girl to-night purposely to please you, and cultivated the proper, correct American accent. Look, in a 'polka-dot foulard,' the cutest thing I've ever struck. Ah—but peace at any price—er—er—even if it's the price of a frock. Eh? but can you not think of one little bit of gossip. Try—do try."

"Let me see—umph! I must please you. Well, you know Mrs Mary Lebourne-Jones. Two years ago she fell in love, and being a girl of most correct principles she married. She had a terribly bad time last week. After spending a weary afternoon having her feet and sharp elbows massaged, she turned up at a dinner, and found ten of her latest husbands among the guests. This is what our friend Lucius Macnamary would call being married more or less. The hostess was in a great fix. Hadn't the least suspicion they had ever been acquainted before.—But that sort of thing is very usual, stale, and ancient. You want something more exciting and up-to-date? You are right. Well! I'll try again. You know Jack Brown; smart man, Jack Brown, friend of Lady Muriel Walton's. Well, he's smashed to the tune of four hundred and ninety-three thousand dollars. Assets—well, guess."

"Oh, I can't. Really, sir, I have a fairly good head for millinery and frocks, chiffons, or anything of that sort, but it don't run to figures. But if you will wait I'll telegraph around—"

"Ah, now, little lady, you're trying to take a rise out of the American."

"Rise out of you. Oh, now, I should smile."

"Well, my dear girl, assets—a dressing-case furnished with gold, a pearl pin, a few neckties, clothes of the last cut, a bone collar-stud and ten cents."

"How sad; what will he do? Marry an heiress?"

"Dear me, no. What put such an notion into your head? They only do those things in England—Marquises and things like that. Jack Brown's a man and an American. No, I reckon he'll begin again pretty sharp. He now dines off chops with a telephone on the table. We think nothing of beginning again in America, I can tell you. You see we go in for being real men out there—not social confectations—it makes all the difference."

"Yes, dear Mr Newport," said Doris, smiling, "and that has set me thinking. A social confection in that sense is usually a very aristocratic young English gentleman, is it not?"

"Assuredly, Madam."

"Well, now, what is the difference between a perfectly-outfitted but dull-witted young English gentleman and a very polite hairdresser's assistant?"

"No difference at all," answered the American, promptly.

"You are wrong. Try again, dunce!"

"I persist I am right. No difference at all."

"Yes, there is."

"Well! my dear girl, what is it?"

"Why! silly man, one has—brains."

"Ah! you have scored two over Mr America, but still there is another difference. You have set me thinking now, you see."

"Impossible!" returned Doris. "I protest there is no other difference."

"I assure you there is."

"Well, what is it? for I refuse to consider such an impossibility."

"Why, pure accident of birth, my dear young lady."

"Shake hands, Mr Newport, we are going to be great friends."

"I am afraid you and I are rather down on the youngsters, Miss Doris," chuckled the American, but before the chuckle had reached and convulsed his waistcoat his face was clothed in stony immobility; for he had been reared on the strictest principles of United Presbyterianism.

"Oh no, it isn't that! no one is old these days, not even centenarians, for they of course have the advantage of us in beginning another childhood, but everyone is too busy to waste time on youngsters. The cheap cynicism of youngsters is so terribly stale and out of fashion, male and female. Everyone must be quite middle-aged these days, with the smartness and wit that only comes from experience of life. I am horribly behind the times, but still I hope I shall grow quite fashionable. In the meantime I am cultivating wrinkles and crowsfeet."

"Wrinkles?" hazarded Mr Newport, staring at her shrewdly. "You surely require no one to put you up to——"

"Oh! real wrinkles, I mean. Quite too horrid——"

"Now, Miss Doris, to change the subject and to come to the point. Would you not like to appear on Washington asphalt in your own flyer? and I've got a very nice shanty—some people are simple enough to call it a palace—all of marble, at Florida; that's our Riviera across the pond, filled with *monde qui s'amuse*. It is now the *bon dernier* of new localities. They call it Eden. Now nothing is more *chic* or milliardiare than to start off in one's yacht—er—for a honeymoon—to this land of enchantment. The latest caprice, *pour les gens riches*. I give you my word

the palace looks inside like a nest of Michael Angelo or Leonardo da Vinci. Don't you think you—er—er—you—would like to have it, and—er—just throw me somehow into the bargain, eh?"

Doris looked at him.

Then she calmly rose from her seat, buttoned her long evening gloves and prepared to go.

"Heigh-ho! So you're just like all the—— Well, Mr Newport, much as I admire that splendid American habit of holding oneself equal to any man, I do not want to end my days and risk becoming merely *dollars* and *twang*. So, if that's your point, excuse me—but I think it's about time for me to go. Oh! I'll—I'll send you a bottle of embalming fluid to-morrow, dear, first post." And at that moment another partner came and claimed her.

It was now exactly eleven o'clock.

There was a charming alcove near enough to the ballroom to obtain a view through the gauze-like drapery across the doorway of the dazzling light and the twirling, waltzing dancers. Japanese artists, such as Koma and Korin, had lent a hand, or rather their brains, to add to its beauty, with their original designs in lacquer.

Two people were sitting there together.

In the air, flitting about invisibly a mischievous little nature spirit was singing with its spiritual voice, but so few people yet will believe in the reality of the unseen.

"Bright lamplight for the butterfly,
And a burnt wing by and by,

Bitter tears in the break-water,
And a breaking heart to bear."

No one of course heard. Modern Society will take a few more centuries to see and hear with other eyes and other ears than merely the physical.

"Really, an *affaire du cœur* takes more thought, effort, ingenuity, than politics or the Stock Exchange," thought Valerie as she glanced at the man sitting at her side. Then she turned her head quickly as he raised his eyes, and appeared to be interested not in him but the gay scene in the ballroom. They were on the very threshold of Vanity Fair. Puppets themselves, watching other interesting puppets, and as their acquaintance advanced it seemed they were becoming to each other problems of psychology which they were interested in solving. They had been drifting of course quite naturally into discussing love and bliss in the abstract. Subjects so abstruse, that Valerie, finding difficulty in continuing the discussion, had occasionally turned her deafest ear, and drawn his attention to the dancers or to some gorgeous invention suddenly sprung upon them by the cotillion-leader. There had been silence between them for several moments.

"Ah! there is my dear 'victim' husband being dragged into the thickest of the fray," exclaimed Valerie; her eyes had hidden springs of mirth.

In the midst of baskets of flowers, a hundred shepherdesses' gilded crooks crowned with artificial nosegays and streaming ribbons, pretty women, men laden with trays of presents, waltzed the tall, slight figure of Mr Trelawney. He had lately been running a theatrical company, and was now in his element, his fair girlish but very handsome face flushed with wine and dancing. She looked at the calm, quiet, cool man at her side, unconsciously comparing them.

"By the way—you never gave us that discourse you promised, on 'Women,'" she said.

"Did I promise?"

"Oh yes. I did my duty; I gave you the key-note."

"Ah, yes! I recollect now. We were discussing

husbands and wives, were we not?—The inevitable inconveniences of wedded life."

Valerie smiled. "You must not, please, say that again."

"Slight inconveniences," he went on again, cynically, "calculated to correct too much hilarity and sentimentality."

"Hush!" said Valerie.

"Well, we are all fettered more or less by mediævalism," he continued. "I wonder if I may tell you a secret?"

"Yes, you may."

"Well, my very good wife has a great complaint against me. It is that I do not thirst for Fame. The only way I think to be peaceful in this world is to be insignificant. How I pity those poor people who have to be against their wishes notorious."

"Oh but really, do be sensible again," said Valerie. "It's almost as *bourgeois* to talk about domestic matters and the misbehaviour of your cook, and as bad form as it is for a sane woman to talk, or even whisper, of the little mistakes of her husband, or a man of his wife. They are both the necessities of every well-regulated household and family, and the woman who keeps the same cook, without changing, and the same—husband—er—without changing, is, after all, in my opinion, in the end the best manager."

He was silent.

He was looking at her now with a smiling, quizzical expression on his face, as they sat together a little way out and within sight of the ballroom. She was clothed in a mass of white tulle, with scarlet flowers near her throat. He seemed to see before him only her red lips and beaming eyes. Above her head there was a tower of wanton, dancing, emerald-green leaves, and buds—a Paul Neron rose-tree, growing in a Japanese jar at the side, taken from the

conservatory. Its fresh buds and sweet tendrils leaned towards her, gently moved by the light wind that came from the half-open window.

The next moment, impulsively, he did a mad, foolish thing. He broke off one of the roses and threw it into her hands, and said,—

"You are just like that—a new-blown rose."

His action spoke of his emotion with its impetuous mastery.

Valerie looked at him for a moment. "Oh!" she returned carelessly, "I am aware that even my bitterest enemy could not say that I was not a success in this new frock." Then she laughed and took up the rose, shook it, and fastened it into the lace at her neck.

"What—er—a pity roses have thorns!"

He glanced around quickly. Then he leaned over her, and a daring, defiant look came into his eyes.

"Yes," he returned, "and—what a pity it is that love—wild, passionate love—can weave a chain around the heart of man more terrible than the tortures of Hell, even though it is the twentieth century."

The little invisible nature spirit above laughed again, but no earthly ears heard—only the few can hear as yet in this century.

"Butterfly, good-bye to your shell,
And bright wings speed you well.

Bright lamplight for the butterfly,
And a burnt wing by and by.

Alas! Butterfly, alas! for your shell,
And bright wings, fare you well."

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

All seemed infected by the flirtatiousness of this modern house-party this evening, from the hor

and the prosiest old generals to the Dean and a limp and pale curate, who had now joined it, who had never in his life had so many flutterings of heart. But the true flirt, when in the many comedies a suspicion of tragedy creeps in, if she is wise, immediately rings down the curtain. It keeps the modern house-party within the region of respectable conventional propriety. But, alas! how few women are wise.

It was twelve o'clock. Lady Violet and the literary Dean sat together in another small room. She had spent a busy, trying morning, she told him, writing to his photographer, arranging about the hundredth miniature of "her dear Pom," also to his dentist in Welbeck Street, about a new gold tooth for him.

"Poor dear doggie!" she smiled tearfully. "Poor dog, he is far from well. I think he must be suffering from acute hallucinatory melancholia. I think it must be the result of so many articles filling the newspapers on the subject of hallucinations. It is thought-transference, I am sure. You see he is very sensitive to external influences."

"Umph! Judging from the way he howled last night, my dear friend, I should say he might be suffering from acute demoniac possession, or else it was distinctly noisy sentiments of Anglo-phobia," said the Dean, with a sacerdotal expression on his face. Then he smiled.

"Poor doggie, he is very depressed," she continued. "I think he has experienced a serious love affair, but I will take him from here to London, that place of forgetfulness. Oh, my wicked doggie! I regret so much if he disturbed you last night in one of your numerous complex, intellectual studies, of course."

The Dean looked up sharply.

"Yes, I passed the night in study," he said.

"Poor doggie, I am afraid he is very weak. His life is hanging on a thread."

"Hanging on," as if the word suggested something to him. "Oh yes, certainly. Anything to oblige you, dear Lady Violet. Bring him around to-morrow. Never mind the thread. I'll select a rope—it's stronger."

The good Dean felt quite sparkingly brilliant and disagreeable, and continued to perform this part with exemplary zeal for another half hour.

It was now half-past three o'clock. Valerie Trelawney was sitting in her room in her dressing-gown and slippers.

"Once upon a time," she began to herself, "now that sounds exactly like a fairy-tale—dear, dear, fairy-tales, how I loved them. When I was very young and knew nothing of the world, I swore to abandon all feminine vanities and fleshpots, but that is past. And what I like so much about Society and the really smart set, is that one can enter into a flirtation, even a serious love affair, as naturally, easily, and in exactly the same way as one would play a game of bridge or ping-pong." Then she kicked off one of her slippers.

"And if you fancy another woman's husband, you just take him. It's the right and fashionable thing to do. No one has any old-fashioned scruples about that sort of thing these days. And—the other woman. Well! oh, well, she takes yours, or somebody else's! It's simply being modern! Yes, simply being modern." Of course she did not mean it in the least, but this manner of thinking amused her.

She leaned back in her chair. "He really is a delightful man—and knows how to make love exactly as if he meant it, which requires so much practice nowadays. Yes," she continued meditating

"what I like so much about Society is its absolute freedom. I mean, of course, only for married people. Nobody thinks of marriage certificates." Then she laughed right out. "Oh! that is so horribly plebeian and middle-class. In these days 'all smart married men' are known as 'married-bachelors.' And 'real bachelors,' by the way, ape the habits of 'old-fashioned married men,' become *blasés*, stay at home with their cigars, and play cards, like inveterate fossils and gamblers. Women bore them, while the 'married-bachelors' are flirting and flitting about with, and running off with the heiresses, and everybody else's wives—but their own. And it's the same with the 'married women'—they are really the girls of society; everyone knows that. Occasionally they send for an 'unmarried girl friend' as a convenience, a 'sort of chaperon' for them, if there is anywhere they desire to go that is too risky, thus making a nice innocent trio. Well! nothing matters much. Our life is so short, like a fleeting flower born one morning, and as soon as the sun goes down, lighting the green grass and sky with changing red hues of splendour, fading or disappearing, thus, we go too!"

At that moment Doris came into her room, in her usual fashion, to say good-night, but she stopped half way. For three seconds she scrutinised Valerie's face. Then the laugh died on her lips. She turned to go, but Valerie looked up sharply, and Doris said simply, "Live it down."

Then she went away.

"L'amour est une passion qui vient souvent sans savoir comment, et qui s'en va aussi de même," she murmured.

Four o'clock.

"I am a great student of life," Doris was saying to her woman in her room. "And in love affairs, as well as in all life up to the present, Marie, the men have had the roses and the women the thorns.

But we women are changing all that in this century." She spoke in a very determined way. "We take the roses, and we always see that it's the man now who gets the thorns. We are grown wiser and we always consider—the end. Good-night, don't forget my words. When you're in the early throes—permit no trifling with thy young affections!"

When alone she said to herself, "The Countess says 'the emotion of love is very necessary for progress and proper development,' but I wouldn't fall 'really in love,' and get my heart broken, for worlds. It does no good and only puts one off one's feed. I guess I'll hang on the parent branch sometime yet. 'Love' affairs seem to end only in tragedy, or monotonous domesticity. I'm past the age when I used to keep letters tied in blue ribbons! and attached a sentimental importance to the most matter-of-fact remarks. Valerie is quite right, matrimony requires a special education—as well as any other profession. A true, reasonable, common-sense flirt, who never loses her head, is a social benefactor."

Doris was far too fresh and capable of seeing the humorous side, to develop sentimentalism.

"Bright lamplight for the butterfly,
And a burnt wing by and by,"

sang the invisible little nature spirit, until everyone slept; and then, with that scrap of song scarcely having left its lips, and denuded of body, it floated away to another world; thus unlimited, it lost itself in the Infinite, eventually becoming plunged in the immensity of God.

The majority of civilised people to-day in every country profess a belief in the existence of worlds other than the physical globes scattered through space, of worlds invisible, superphysical and supersensuous; yet if anyone professes actual contact in the everyday world, their belief is then found to be of the

flimsiest nature. We find, then, people are ruled only by the physical, no matter what they profess or what they vow to believe most unreal, through their own Church and religion. There is a most unfortunate lack of the sense of actuality of the superphysical worlds, which is not so strong in the East. We think we have no powers to cognise them. They think it enough that we shall pass into them at death. The realisation of these worlds, if they are really to influence conduct, should be a constant fact in our consciousness, and we must each live in the three worlds—the physical, the astral, the heavenly. But at present that is only actual to man to which our consciousness responds. And so the worlds, their inhabitants invisible, may play upon a man, but while he is unconscious of their presence, for him they do not exist. But the invisible world can be made present to consciousness, and will be to all, when man's powers are more unfolded. Are the prophets, the saints, the mystics, the seers, all frauds? If we believe in any, so must we believe in the actuality of the invisible around us.

CHAPTER VI

"EHESTAND, WEHESTAND"

"Women's jars breed men's wars."

"Men's walking, like all walking, is a series of falls."

"Man, when he loves, is never quite depraved."

—LAMB.

LUCIUS MACNAMARY was sitting alone in one of the great, cool morning-rooms, out of which is the parlour lined with old oak of the Jacobean period, full of relics and interesting objects collected by the hostess and brought to Sussex. He was dreaming in luxury and peace. The sunshine shone in at the windows, glorifying his face and everything around him. The scent of the flowers came from the conservatory, the sound of the cooing birds. He was in dreamland. It seemed to him that everything now spoke to him of Valerie Trelawney. He closed his eyes, and in place of her face saw his own wife's, sadly, unfortunately, grown stout, very red, material, and practical. Somehow he knew she was near; he felt her approaching.

How terrible it is that there are people united who bring to each other an influence that depletes and discourages: like a jarring sound on the great instrument of life's harmonies, like discordant voices in the streets, the screeching of steam-engines, the moaning of dogs in pain. If possible, we should only live with those in whose comprehension of life there is something which is perfectly akin to our own. For our physical and mental health and vigour we

need the presence of those to whom we are related spiritually, who think as we do, whose outflow of thought is full of love and sympathy. They are our real vital supplies. Nothing is so certain and yet so much denied than the positive fact that morality is not one and the same for all. What is right for one is wrong for another. Lucius seemed to awake from a world of his own—a world of romance, an inward world that he had created for himself, and he was jealous of the mental atmosphere created by his thoughts. The basic principles of all life are in its dual forces of emotion, which are subjective. The man who adheres only to objective facts is like a fly in a spider's web.

"Ah, my world is unreal and it vanishes," he said at last, "my creations fall to the ground like children's castles of bricks."

He sighed and snatched up a paper and pretended to read. It was a deplorable fact and terrible to relate that at the present time only his wife's mere presence seemed to destroy the play and elasticity of his spirits, to belittle and demean him, he knew not why or how. How people arrive at this state of error of living takes an astonishing amount of tracing, beginning with one error through innumerable stages of increasing errors. Yet however wrong it may be, it is true that a moment before Lucius Macnamary was in a higher world, and had sunk to a lower one, from the warm light of love, the flowers of romance, refined ideality and spirituality—to what?—disharmony, hatred, physical plane conditions and to coldness, to ice, to the stern realities, or what people call "realities," of objective life. When will people realise that "stern realities," or troubles, are only errors to be rectified, that life should be lovely for everyone; and they have it in themselves to make it so exquisite and delightful, yet they occupy their minds with everything that is

unpleasant, unless it is the working of the law by which we have to work off some ill deeds to others in some former lives. All duty that does not eventually lead to happiness is mistaken duty, and contrary to God's law. Whenever there is pain, we have struck ourselves against the good law in some way, and should search for the true cause of the error.

Lucius's reverie was interrupted by a voice, then his wife came upon his morning's peace and shattered it.

"We have lashed together two warring temperaments. If two forces of character different from each other meet, disharmony will be the result," he murmured to himself. "Oh! why did I not discover that earlier in life? Undoubtedly 'the study of temperaments' will be the important discovery and subject for the twentieth century." He was trying hard to form some rational, scientific idea of morality.

He sat up.

"The commercial instinct and the artistic cannot be harnessed together." Surely, somehow, he felt rebuked by his wife's energy, vitality, practicability. He faced her like a school-boy, aware that he had been a long time dreaming—and not of her. He looked positively ugly.

"Lucius! I think the atmosphere of this 'house-party' decidedly immoral.—Oh! and I have had such a batch of bothering letters from San Francisco," said she, with her eternal and not even pretty American accent. "Everything I have set my heart on seems to be going wrong. It is really irritating and depressing. Can you not help me? Here is one saying there is a horrible explosion of gas at the New York house, and here are some fearfully long bills to be attended to.—Who, by the way, is that extraordinary girl called Doris?—Oh! Lucius, there are such heaps of arrangements to make—all the new

buildings I have planned on my American estates. Oh! the trouble is so immense! immense!"

She sat near him sighing. Her life embittered by legal correspondence, cables and messages.

"Then, Lucius, there is my house-party for next month of your country people. I have invited the dear Dean, but no one else here, of course. His friend, Canon Willerton, and those clever Howard girls and their mother and aunt, and some of your relations and mine from across the pond. I hope they will not clash. Dear me, life to me seems made up of worrying details. It is one eternal worry, and necessitates the whole of one's lifetime making arrangements, scheming, planning."

"Do you not think you make it a worry? Could you not do without your many houses, your large parties, new buildings, hundred and one servants and belongings? I should be so content with a quiet, unostentatious life."

"Impossible, impossible, Lucius, everything fits in one with another. If I were to cease my endless planning for one week, everything would go wrong. No, Lucius, I am an ambitious woman, and I am sorry I did not marry an ambitious man, not a quiet thinker and scholar like you. If I had married a Member of Parliament I would have made him Prime Minister, but you are so lazy, you have no ambition in you.—But about my house-party, here are the names of some influential people whom I wish to cultivate."

"Lucius!" she went on again, "I am worried about my two sons, especially Austin. He has been heavily gambling again, he has been led away, got into some scrape. I sent him a thousand pounds yesterday; he has just written for another thousand to go on with."

"Ship him off to South Africa! Let him know what it is to earn his livelihood, then let him come

back, give him his fortune, and see what he will do with it."

"In other words, follow in your footsteps. Do nothing all his life but read and think, and occasionally live like an Indian hermit. You should have had ambition, and made yourself a great, rich man. You have never had any occupation. You have been living the life of a bachelor for years in quite a monastic fashion. It is time for you to wake up and remember you are a married man, and burn all those horrid books."

"But your ideas of greatness and mine, unfortunately, do not coincide, my wife. Ambition for the benefits of this illusive world is a doubtful quality, which finds no room in the great mind."

"Well, it is not my fault that you are a mere nonentity. I am sure I have preached to you enough, tried ceaselessly to urge you on to make more money and a name, but my efforts have been fruitless. So I have turned my attention to my sons, and I shall make something of them instead."

"I hope you will succeed. They are on the right road. My efforts with your sons, my wife, have also been fruitless, because your ideas and mine differ. I have tried to first make that boy, a man. I have tried to teach them both, but particularly Austin, the value of money, and show him the horrible poverty and misery in the world, but your will must be stronger than mine, for he has followed in your footsteps. You spent your time influencing your children, consequently they have grown up with your ideas reflected in their brains, none of mine, so we don't get on. You sent them to college. I would have educated them in my own way, had you allowed me to treat them as my own. I would first have shown them every inch of the world, before they began to study. Their first books should have been Life, and Human Nature. I recommended the boys

to study less effete Greek, philosophy and poetry, and would have first tried to train them to the solid business of life—mining, engineering, commerce, manufacture, political economy. At present, they are both effeminate, gambling little nincompoops.”

“How dare you, Lucius! speak of my poor, dear, dead husband’s children in that way. You have failed in your duty and attitude to my children, and now you blame me.”

“The sacrifice of woman, or a mother’s unselfishness does harm not good.” Lucius rose, looked like going and said: “Oh! there will be a new order to everything soon. I firmly believe all old ideas will have to make way for the new. That after a fight the conservative remnant will be left behind by the radical reformer. I believe that the custom of allowing absolute ownership of land to individuals will also go, and it must belong only to communities. We want change, change—in everything. My wife, when will you cease to be a prophet of despair, and learn to think of yourself and allow your children to think for themselves? Then they would grow up men and women. Why should your woman’s life be sacrificed entirely to the lives of others? This sacrifice of a woman’s individuality to children is the cause of the slow progress of the race. It is enough for you that you have brought them into the world, without turning yourself into a martyr and losing yourself entirely in them. Every man and woman should be brought up from his or her cradle to see that he is an atom and has a separate existence of his own; that he has to struggle, to battle through for his existence, and not to lean in any way upon other atoms, namely, his parents. For parents to devote their lives to their children, to lose their individuality, to be overburdened with duties to them, only ruins and prevents their progress. But if one is to be sacrificed, it is the man, the stronger, not the woman, the weaker,

who bore them. There never was a really great man or woman yet, who had not to struggle for himself, and often for herself, and many lives as well at the same time."

"Lucius, you have terrible ideas. You quite frighten me with your strange notions. You would like to see my children left alone in the world, without friends, or relations, to assist them in the struggle for existence, and you would calmly tell me it was good for them."

"I would not willingly wish that," said he. "But it is exactly what I would like them to feel. You would then be a woman, a human being, as well as a good wife and mother, with aims and plans, if you liked, for yourself, living your own life, able to evolve and develop. Family petting is the hotbed of dependence. Let each of your children study life, human nature outside, and know something of the horrible struggle for existence among those who have never inherited money. The lies, deceit, the crushing, the scandalising of others on their way, the pushing down, the theft, false impressions given of one woman always against another, to try and place her at a disadvantage, the lying scandal to steal from her the good opinion of those who would be her friends, the hideous network of evil, jealous minds, clinging around all women. Oh! Well—all—all—human nature as I have studied it, and which your children will never know while guarded, shielded, and you and I think for them."

Lucius Macnamary was wrong in some of his notions, for in life there should be no sense of separation, but disappointment had made him occasionally bitter and hard, and he was in a bad mood. His wife's will and occasional sneer affected his nerves like a heavy thunderstorm. Casuists say that our first sense of duty was derived from the idea of what is due to ourselves. But those who know

no higher motive than their own enjoyment are bound to go wrong and suffer. From the consciousness of what is due to ourselves, proceeds the conception of what is proper for another. The art of living in right social relations is virtually dependent upon the just regard of every individual for the rights and welfare of others. Those who established the maxim of "Everyone must shift for himself" had not passed beyond the confines of savage, animal, uncivilised life.

That morning he had strolled into the nearest large town, and had come across a dirty little ragamuffin lad, with brown skin and cheeks nursed by the sun. In a moment he had scented the adventure and soldier-love in the boy, created possibly by the sight of street processions, red coats, military music, and the admiration of the women hanging on to them. And Lucius, although he was a war hater, a soldier hater himself, saying always, to create soldiers was to create the savage instinct in man, on this occasion said, "That boy has more manliness in him than either of my wife's two sons."

"It is difficult to think with exactitude," he went on saying, "now you have got into your head all the old exploded thoughts of woman's duties, that are still floating about the world and find lodgment in the brains of women, as women, wives and mothers. Old ideas which started from one cause, the negation of one human being to the selfishness and savage instinct of another, the dominant, the stronger. From this, believe me, have arisen all your poetic ideas you think duty. It is piteous, even now, that a woman's life is from birth to death, except in rare cases of intelligence, controlled and influenced by thoughts prevalent in the world, old errors of other minds belonging to past centuries. No better instanced than by the greatest woman leader of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who

simply for exercising her own thoughts and intelligence, is still surrounded with enemies and the baneful, ignorant malice of those she seeks to save by her bitter experiences and strong thought. That which is called the sense-reasoning of the world is often great error, and it applies only to the whole but rarely to individuals. Yet it is by this that women are mostly controlled and persuaded, by errors of other minds, that never could apply to them in individual cases. There cannot be better life for woman as a whole until every human being casts away the thoughts and influences of others, of present and past generations, and thinks for himself or herself. Then, and then only, will woman cease to be guided by past errors, rules, habits and customs, ridiculous mistakes in reasoning, caused by the careless indifference of man first in making laws concerning women, being then—when they were made—devoid of sufficient imagination to picture himself in her position. Indeed, man has often entirely false ideas of woman, looking ever at her solely from his own point of view, his ideas coloured always from the influence of other women's minds around him. And from all these, laws, marriage laws, divorce and others, were made concerning her. Few men really know one woman for themselves—they know only what they imagine she is—yet still only men make and deal with all laws concerning women, as well as for themselves."

At that moment his step-daughter entered the room, carrying a book. She wore a big eyeglass, her hair was short like a man's, and the expression on her face was far from expressing gentleness, kindness, or obedience. Lucius went to meet her with a smile. She was his wife's daughter, he would try again to like her; but he was met by a freezing stare.

"Pray, do not get up, Papa," she began. "I have

come to say I really think the time has come for mother and for me to make an appeal to your honour. I cannot stand by and see the love and affection which should be my mother's, deliberately given to another woman, and in such a barefaced manner, and such an irreligious, worldly woman as Valerie Trelawney. Her ruling passion is her love for plays and flowers."

"I do not permit this. How dare you—" began Lucius Macnamary, angrily, then he stopped. "But no—I can have no scene here."

He went straight to the library and left them together, without another word.

Everything on earth and in the air above is permeated with the earth's magnetic force. A great German astronomer has computed this force—that the attractive or lifting power, if equally distributed throughout the mass of earth, would make the magnetic intensity of every cubic yard equal to 60 lbs of attractive force. All human bodies are charged with different degrees of magnetic forces. Strength varies with the condition and health of the persons. Very much of nervous prostration is either over-production or lack of this fluid to sustain polarity, the loss of which produces imperfect health. Human bodies are all charged also with the opposite form of electricity—the negative. The correct blending of the two forces, positive and negative, being permeated with divine essence, produces what we call life. Through the law of magnetic attraction and repulsion comes the stronger union, or else the unhappiness of man and wife. Being drawn together, sometimes by the fires of youth, they awaken to a greater harmony and peace, or to discord and misery, which is only repulsion through the magneto-electric world of nature. Many suffer in this way, and not suspecting the cause, remain in the midst of spiritual inharmony until the physical health is

undermined. Many such martyrs there are, and they themselves have not the comforting consciousness of good achieved for others which martyrdom usually brings.

"There is nothing worth living for. Love—a snare; marriage—a disillusioning, vulgar episode," thought Lucius Macnamary.

It was rather dark in the room he had gone to. The trees outside shaded the windows. He closed the door noisily, still with an angry expression on his face, which was very flushed, and stood with his back to the fireplace for several minutes without moving.

"Ideal marriage of soul with spirit, of will and intelligence, united in wisdom, heart with head—when will it be realised? Instead, these 'external' marriages, or sexual intercourses, belonging to the animal kingdom. However beautiful the relations of a husband or wife may be, it is true the majority of present-day marriages belong to the animal and lower kingdom; I fear not at all to the spiritual nature. Ah! and the mutual attraction of animals, often more beautiful. Only that which is pure can be harmonious." He went on speaking his thoughts half aloud. "Instead—Oh! the terrible *tedium vitae*.

"The top of the Wave of Evolution is always composed of the abnormal characters, the pioneers, while the safe, dull, respectable organisms follow slowly behind."

For years he had been trying to improve his character—to stifle all unkind thoughts, to feel well disposed to all Humanity, but at this moment there was a glow of hatred in his eyes. He had left his dear Indian books and meditation, and had mingled again in Society, with its ever-increasing moral poisons, and this was now the result. He

was becoming again the slave to his emotions instead of the master.

"I am indeed afraid you are what I call a non-laugher!" exclaimed a bell-like voice, reproachfully. He turned, and looking towards the window saw—Valerie Trelawney. Now, there is such a thing as chemical affinity. The higher ideas of love, emotion and sense, are the affinity and food for souls.

She had been sitting up above the staircase behind the ingle corner of the fireplace. This was the instantaneous impression he received. A delicate, flower-like face, with laughing eyes that flashed into his, reading his soul and every thought, her form clothed in an exquisite confection of white muslin, ribbons and lace, and a huge bunch of pink carnations in her hand, diffusing their fragrance in the air.

He did not even smile, simply bowing; the expression on his face remained unchanged, but somehow he felt that the moment had arrived in his life which must bring a fearful struggle within him, between his undefined sense of right and wrong, for he knew that in him there was a new sense of fresh life, youth, *moreness*—a feeling that never before had his life been complete, never before had he truly lived. The words came to him—"Male and female created He them. One leading downward, the other outward. When both are properly attuned in their union they lead onward and upward."

"Sometimes, I notice even Doris's merry audacities fail to move your laughing muscles," murmured Valerie in her bright way.

"If he doesn't laugh soon," exclaimed another voice from a writing-table with its back to the room, "I will go and fetch Lady Vi's album of honeymoons. Oh! it's the funniest book imaginable! Lucius! You poor quaint instance of the trampling process, haven't you seen it? Well! a lovely cover! two hearts in one corner, with an arrow stuck

through them; a sweet, simple little violet and a green leaf in another. Now, personally, I should have left out the ugly green leaf had I been Lady Vi. It is the only thing not appropriate to her name. There's nothing in the least 'green or plain' about her. Eh? You open the album and see a photograph of the happy pair; of the church, then the railway station they started from; views of the first place they stopped at; photographs of all the strange characters they met on their travels—"

"And the funerals," interposed Lucius. "Where do they come in? Please get on quickly to the funerals, Doris."

"Oh! She discreetly leaves *them* out," returned the girl, seriously. "Lucius, don't you think you would like to start an album of honeymoons? They're all the rage now. I'll go and fetch Lady Vi's to give you a sort of idea."

The next moment she had gone, and the remaining occupants heard the door close again. Lucius Macnamary did not move except his foot. He kept playing a sort of little tune with that on the polished floor, which is distinct sign to a woman of anger and impatience.

"Doris's last was a truly Mephistophelian suggestion," he said simply.

Valerie was smiling. Indeed it was rarely now her voice lost its laughing quality, but when she saw he was looking intensely miserable, her face grew serious. So without much thought she rose from her seat by the window and moved to where he was standing near the fireplace, and stood by him.

"Isn't this a delightful motto over the fireplace?" she said, pointing to it with a smile. "I love mottoes carved in wood or stone in any possible part of a house. By the way, do you know what this means? '*Tan da parth glan lodes laiben.*' It is this—'A good fire, a clean hearth, and a merry woman.' Is not that

a good recipe for a happy home? A curious motto for a Sussex house, is it not?"

Then again there was silence.

"You are very unhappy. What is it? I am *so* sorry. Believe me, it is so idiotic for anyone to be unhappy in these days. It is a mistake; the result of imperfect mental training. Now look at me. I have had the most frightfully depressing news this morning, it seems all my plans have gone wrong, and yet I will not allow myself to be unhappy. Most people cherish unhappiness when they should make up their minds to put it from their thoughts instead. When I get up I look in the glass and smile, then I say to myself, 'I will be happy and smile like that all day long. I will put from my mind all unpleasant thoughts, all uncharitable, unkind thoughts of others. I will be cheerful and look on the bright side of things. I will carry good cheer in my heart, and love, and encouragement in my voice and face, so that my spirits will affect and help others and shed happiness around.' Oh, it is a good plan. Try it, will you?"

But it was only a very sickly smile that Valerie's words called forth on the face of the man.

"Perhaps I require a cup of coffee to stimulate my brain. Really the very shadow of good sense is wanting in our present mode of life, is it not?" he said dryly.

"Oh, do you really, with your intellect, still believe in material remedies for the health and the mind? You see it is so easy," continued Valerie, "all you have to do is to say to yourself, 'I am feeling unhappy no longer—no longer. I am happy, HAPPY, HAPPY,' and you give yourself the suggestion and idea, and in three minutes you become the happiest creature alive. Do try it. Just—to—er—please me!"

The last words Valerie had spoken almost pleadingly, like a child, in her curious way. Quite natur-

ally and unthinkingly she went towards him, looking up into his face,—

"Oh, I hate to see you unhappy. Believe me, unhappiness—in fact any ill - health, mentally or physically, is absolutely absurd, the result of foolish ideas and ignorance. If ever you are ill, or rather you are silly enough to persuade yourself there is anything the matter with you, bodily or mentally, or other's ignorance makes you think so, promise me that you will come straight to me. Lucius Macnamary, I will show you the folly of it all better than all the doctors with their material remedies and long bills, giving the suggestions of ill-health and the faith people have in them acting upon the minds of their patients. Remember that doctors are business men too, and must make money, and it's nearly time that they were, most of them, sent into other businesses. Ah, we have had enough of them surely. In their view, of course, only material remedies are scientific and respectable, but the body is only the clothing, and anything we give it is only effective as it influences the living power within. We are all meant to be so well and happy. Unhappiness is worse than death in life. Happiness and right living with the right people is the elixir of life. From this arises vital force, brain force, muscular force, life-force, and all the other names for the universe-force manifested in our human lives. From the knowledge of this, we become kings and queens in mental and physical vigour, with perfect nerves and optimistic spirits as our priceless jewels and attributes, without seeking them from doctors, or paying bills for what God gives us to help ourselves to, that which is in ourselves, and all around us in His universe. Oh, why do you allow yourself to be unhappy?"

He looked at her, conscious that he was no longer unhappy. In those words of true, well-wishing, intimate sympathy, her love was revealed. Never

had her eyes glowed with any affection for him before.

"Is it possible that I have so lately been so miserable?" he asked himself. It seemed to him that a flame of love, which was new life, had flown around his heart, lapping his whole living soul with joy, throbbing wildly in his veins, and in a moment he determined to tell her. "Yes, I will. What do conventional ideas—customs, matter? Oh, what does anything matter, but to be happy and to love?" he told himself. For days he had made up his mind to think no more of her, to put the thought of her from his brain, yet now he longed for some unmelodramatic way of telling her of this affection pervading his being, and giving his very organism surplus of life-force, driving away pain, anger, sorrow, suffering, and placing in its stead only love, harmony and pleasure. Near her, he felt at once energetic, endowed with a superabundance of life-force, he felt that all mental and physical action was pleasurable, due to nerve and brain - cell vibration, and united mentality being harmonious. Every organ and cell of the material body has nerve centres in the brain with which they are connected; they are developed through happiness, and happiness is pleasure; if that is lacking, there is degeneracy instead of development. Pleasure is desirable and pain is undesirable, not alone that they reveal the quality and characteristics of objects that thus impress the organism, or because they effect certain chemical changes, but for the reason they bring about conditions of the mental organism which are beneficial or injurious to the mind, and create life on other planes. Some people create an amount of life-force, and so save it by their exhilarated optimistic disposition, that there is a good surplus over, necessary to sustain the organism and kept constantly in the nerves and in the brain—the great store-house. All unhappy or miserable sensations are the feeling side of

physiological processes or nerve-cellular movement. Every feeling or physiological process is due to life-force, and impresses on the nerves or ideas of impressions. One class is conducive to the welfare and existence of the individual and race, the other menaces existence. It is obvious that we should learn to distinguish between the two, and that the class conducive to existence, to progress and development be desired, and gained. This ability is provided by Nature, through attaching a pleasurable sensation to those impresses from the minds of others, and to physiological processes which are conducive to the welfare of existence, whilst attaching pain and depression to those which are injurious. What is known as instinct, is no more or less than unconscious mentality. All development and growth are in expansive spirals, from one to many, then in contractive spirals to one again. If in octaves of unison, these pass on to a higher order of being, if in discord and separation, to a lower. If man can ascend, he can also descend. PROGRESSION IS NO MORE A LAW THAN RETROGRESSION."

All his life, Lucius had been unable to quiet restless questionings or allay inner cravings—searching for something, he could not tell what, to be perpetually baffled. Now he knew at last.

"Tell me," he said, quietly moving a step and bending over her, "Valerie—" but as his eyes met hers, his voice changed. He, who had for years studied to control himself, realised that a new sort of love was now rapidly dominating him, changing the light of his eyes, his voice, in fact his whole self. Emotion and love, that sounded itself in his voice, came to her ears like an unhallowed blast of fire from Heaven, for it was from the innermost depth of his divine nature, that inherent divinity which is in all men—for love is truly the secret of life. "Could you?—Do you love me well enough to—"

"Hush!" she said, with a gesture of her hands to put him from her, and a sigh—the recognition of inexorable reality and conventionality, the reality of objective, instead of subjective life.

"As a man asks the one woman—for—I ask you, with my whole soul, with the fate, the future of our lives depending on your answer now. Do you love me well enough?"

"All love and human happiness comes from the celestial, but in purity all flourishes. Few men as yet know what love is." His tone spoke a new language, the language of the soul which speaks through the eyes and illuminates the face.

"You seem to be the spirit of Aphrodite, I the very spirit of Artemis, the energetic," said Lucius Macnamary, looking like a new man.

From the window she could see a gardener walking along the terrace with a barrowful of vivid scarlet geraniums, taking it to the greenhouses. She watched him carefully taking them one by one in his hands, and counting them, then she again remembered Lucius, that he was looking at her with flaming love in his eyes, and that he looked a very tigerish lover, not to be trifled with. She felt like laughing at him, and saying something to annoy and tease him, as usual. But she became conscious that she could not, her tongue seemed tied. It occurred to her now, too, that her future, and the whole happiness of her life, as well as his, might perhaps really depend on her answer. For the mind is not a substance, but an atmosphere of law—a mode of action of the soul. When well balanced, it is a duality. The soul expands by harmonious emotion and contracts and congeals by the want of it. She was silent for a few moments longer, then she laughed and said coolly, but looking away from him,—

"Oh, believe me, my dear friend, experiments of the emotions, I told you, were my studies when first

we met, and platonic loves, even if begun with high ideals, generally end—forgive me, but unfortunately it is so—in these days—in either hysterics or—excuse me again—idiocy!"

"Believe me," continued Valerie, "it is a law of physics that no energy is ever put forth without a corresponding recoil. There comes ever a gradual process of disenchantment and disillusionment. In all my studies of emotions I have found it lamentably apparent."

His countenance changed. He dropped her hand that he held. At that moment the door was opened and Doris returned.

"Oh! I've got it," she ejaculated, "Lady Vi's reminiscences of all her 'honeymoons.' Dear me, it is so odd. Every one collects something nowadays. Our widow, Lady Vi, collects photographs of all the places where she journeyed on innumerable honeymoons. Lucius, you collect pictures; Valerie, you collect—lovers! Oh, don't be shocked, you won't mind my saying it, will you; but you have a mania for experimenting and making us all 'in love' with you. Ah, but of course a house-party is always dangerous, and not conducive anyway to practice of grim stern duty, is it? and would be deadly dull without flirtations and love affairs. You collect tea-gowns, another mania. Some men collect birds' eggs, stamps; the majority collect everything they can lay their hands on worth anything. I had a maid like that once. A nice man I know collects butterflies, which is the most charming fancy of all, and shows the nicest mind. Oh, don't laugh, Lucius, and mistake me, I mean real butterflies, you know, not the sort you mean, the sort of varied butterflies you collect. I've met your sort before. Ones that fly about in the country. Rural butterflies in the lanes, I mean. Oh, don't tease, I mean in the air. Of course, I don't mean the butterflies you mean, who sup at the

Carlton, the Savoy, and the Casinos abroad. How can you be so annoying? Those are a much more expensive collection. Oh, they must be. You are a great authority. Yes, perhaps? and not half so lovely as my butterflies. This man spends weeks and weeks in the country, stays out all night to try and get a rare specimen, and his dear, beautiful, brilliant wife—Lucius, what are you making yourself so ridiculous for? You do nothing but laugh like a silly school-boy, and just now you were so gloomy—a regular wet blanket—when you entered this room. Oh, but do come into another, this is getting so dark and cold.”

Doris had her way. They followed her into another, where they found a group of lovely women and lively men all ready for gossip and fun.—except the good Dean, and he was saying with the very best intention, “It is as hollow and uninteresting as—”

“Polite conversations!” broke in impertinent Doris. “Now, that’s exactly like papa; when the paternal exchequer is in the usual empty condition, he always says everything is hollow. It’s the way he describes Life, after my little bills at various intervals when I return for my usual two days’ rest-cure after the season, Cowes, or the Riviera. I send them to him the week before I go home. Then I arrive and shake hands with everyone, kiss all the latest babies, and tell papa that running up bills has now become a national disease like cricket, and then tell him of the last young man, with a million, I have at my heels. For papa, dear papa, is a very practical man, you know, and is always trying to introduce ‘gilded’ youth to me—that is, *gilded* and otherwise—but more otherwise nowadays. He is always repeating that proverb—of Solomon’s, I think it is—‘Love does much, but money does more.’ Then I leave him to open the bills. You know, Lucius, he lately got a craze for country life and

bought a place in 'Llan—Llan—' something I have never been able to pronounce, although I once spent three overpowering weeks there—the rest is, 'SS SS S S S, SSSS, SS, SS, SSSS!' and so on, and so on—in a remote corner of North Wales. He planted us all down there, and expected us to spend the rest of our natural lives among the 'baa-lambs,' watching the buttercups grow. But as I was telling the Countess yesterday, I prefer the artificial buttercups on the hats of the 'Rue de la Paix,' to papa's real ones in the fields, and the 'baa-lambs,' the inane—even the insane—ones of society. Yes? They are not as pretty as papa's, or anything like as innocent, but when they appear first they usually have a big balance at their bankers, and haven't the least notion what to do with it, and like to be assisted in the scattering of it, in a polite and blameless way. They bring in, too, with their immaculate clothes, a delightful essence of Mayfair. Not so to you. No! well to me they are more entertaining, or I wouldn't be here."

"Oh! so you insinuate they abound here, do you?" remarked he, slowly.

"Did I say so? Well, perhaps, who knows? There is a black sheep in every flock, isn't there? I always believe that birds of a feather flock together. 'Like attracts like.'"

"That is why you come, finding us all so irresistible, when you might be attending your innocent flock at home."

"Oh! What nonsense we have drifted into talking."

"Miss O'Carroll—er—is, I am afraid," complained the Dean, "a young lady noted for great unmethodised enquiry and illogical reasoning. I have been studying a little pamphlet, it is called *The Critique of Pure Reason*. May I give it to you, Miss Doris?"

"Naiv muss jedes wahre Genie sein oder es ist keines," quoted Doris in return.

CHAPTER VII

"TEAR THYSELF AWAY FROM ALL THAT DETAINS
THEE."

"With all the intelligence and powers possessed by the most advanced portions of the human race, we are a long way off from the state and period when the wisdom and love powers, still latent in the spiritual part of our forms, shall evolve into activity. The human principle has not yet subjected the animal principle in the structural form. We have subjected the animal kingdom *external* to ourselves, but the animal kingdom *within* ourselves yet awaits the conquering Power of Spirit, which must and will be developed in due time."

A FEW days afterwards the Countess and Valerie Trelawney were exchanging confidences, sitting together in a pretty octagon room. "Everyone is tired of the 'marriage problem.' Because none seems to be able to solve it, people are content to discuss it no longer, and try to think of something new, leaving it unsolved, but still as necessary to be solved as ever it was. There was a murder in France lately, of a woman by her husband, which gave French people fresh life to renew the discussion. Also a recent English divorce case, titles on both sides, a case people thought got up purposely to break their chains, ending in nothing. What will be the end of it in this century—all the unhappy marriages, all the unsuited, ill-matched couples, children torn from their mothers, men's position, name and prospects ruined?"

"Who can tell? It is all very sad. I wonder what you will say when I tell you that Lucius Macnamary and I are going to solve it, or to try to, just for experiment," chimed in Valerie Trelawney.

The good Countess opened her sleepy-looking,

beautiful eyes a degree wider. "That you and Lucius will be a very clever couple and this century will owe you an enormous debt, and be ever grateful. May I ask—when?—and—er—and how?"

"Well, I want to solve this problem. I am sure there is a way to be happy, out of it all, for those unsuitably married, so we have decided to set an example, and we hope all 'unhappily married people' will follow it as soon as they can agree, or agree to differ and make the sensible legal arrangements, and all do everything that lies in their power for the benefit and future of all their children before they start. We are anxious to see who are our real friends, who will remain so, and who will instead be governed more by old-fashioned prejudice and custom. So we are going to give a huge splendid reception, invite all the world, and then sail away before everyone in Lucius's yacht, or a flying machine, or balloon, or perhaps even go in an old-fashioned automobile."

"How interesting! and who may I ask is going to give you away?"

"You silly, old-fashioned thing! You don't imagine we are going to have 'a wedding.' It will only be a very grand sort of wedding reception. Then one long honeymoon ever after."

"Oh, I see! A wedding 'reception' with the wedding left out."

"Exactly. You see when four people are wretched, if two can reduce the number of miserable beings by two, is it not their bounden duty to do so? And who cares for the World? There are plenty of others, if we could only get to them."

"I shall be glad to see how your scheme will work out, and what the World will say about it?" said the Countess, calmly. "Remember, it is on the woman that the trouble will lie. A woman places herself in terrible danger who does this."

"It does not matter what the world says. Ah! tell me, Countess," said Valerie, half laughing and half in earnest, "you who have lived every hour of your life, is there any remedy for love?"

"Love—remedy! Let me see! Yes, my dear," returned the Countess. "Go and learn some new language—Scandinavian, Arabic, Greek—anything you like. But stick at it when you feel the emotion coming on. I always recommend Chinese as an excellent remedy above all other studies for love and most ridiculous sentimentality."

"Love, Countess, is the sweetest flower of the soul," murmured Valerie, sitting on the floor and leaning her head against her friend's knee.

"Indeed! and I once heard a man describe it as fatty degeneration of the mind. Away with dreaming, Valerie. You once compared the difficulty of solving the marriage problem to that of Home Rule for Ireland—that aggravating, almost hopeless, still unsolved question. There are four possible relations for Ireland and England. Unity of Crowns, Legislative Union of Parliament, Dependence, and Home Rule, but it is only between two the choice really lies—Independence or Legislative Union. Now with the 'marriage' problem, believe me, there isn't any choice at all for a woman, so why on earth you compared it, I can't see, except for the similarity of tantalisation. Remember, there is a boundary line to be kept in sight, separating personal freedom from lawlessness. Having once taken this step, and finding it easy, there is the risk of your taking the step again, and yet again, of others following your example, with not quite such poetical sentiments, and without any justifiable reasons. People who have families—it is there the disaster comes in. When will people realise that it is not by the rupture of Marriage, but by making true marriage understood and easier, that evils are reformed. And yet another piece of advice from a

saying of Zarathustra, my dear. 'To many a man it is not right to give thy hand but only thy paw, and I want thy paw also to have—claws.'

"But, Countess, we should by our example and experiment be conferring a boon on our benighted fellow-creatures," laughed Mrs Trelawney. "Why will not people understand that the true meaning of liberty is the right to do what one needs to do, leaving equal opportunity to others?"

At present she was exactly the type of the "modern" fashionable young woman, motivated by nothing intellectual or noble, but giddy, passionate, reckless, mischievous, and full of fancied knowledge, betraying itself as ignorance, led hither and thither by desire, and all the deadly attractions of the World. At that moment a change passed over the Countess's face. Valerie looked at her and shivered. She imagined this was one of her friend's mad moods—at least, that which ordinary people called madness. The Countess had told her there were times when a disembodied spirit actually came, and moved her to speak, seeming to take possession of her, using her body as a medium to communicate messages to people in this lower world—that is a lower one apparently than their own. Was it possible there was really a personality other than her friend's speaking now? The change and stony stare seemed to answer for the truth of this, that she was at that point where the mind of the medium ceases and where the control of spirit begins. The Countess was certainly in one of her most religious and curious moods. She declared it was so that an advanced spiritualist could incarnate into the grown-up body of another still living, or even take possession of it as the other was leaving it. Personal identity, she said, was a fiction of the physical plane only.

"Men by following Christ reach the highest state to which Nature has destined them!" she exclaimed

now suddenly, "at last become Godlike in their purity and development while still on earth, possessing wondrous capabilities and senses, they never have yet dreamed of. 'The Word became man that we might become Gods' (Athanasius). To the perfectly-evolved man there is no Death. There will then only be light, joy, happiness on earth. This is when all have reached a certain development. It will be Heaven on earth, which women will assist men to work out for themselves when they, too, have evolved and aim at leading men to purity, instead of enticing them to brutedom. Ah! then will women evolve, and men and women meet on the common ground of humanity, utterly regardless of sex. Women now have ever hindrances to retard them from evolving into the ideal designed for them, and which they have not begun to grasp, owing to the attitude of men and the world towards them. When man ceases to consider woman for his selfishness and self-gratification, the symbolical 'curse of Eve' will be at an end. Man's attitude to woman since the beginning of the race represents the struggle of evil against good. His animalism, worldly love and selfishness is the spirit of evil within him, fighting against God's instrument, Woman, retarding the Evolution of the world from purity and goodness. Man is madly weaving in the loom of life at the first drapery which is to clothe him in his home. This is the first victory of man when he has cast the animal off. When he has become sufficiently spiritual death cannot touch him. No man is yet recognised to have reached this state but Christ, although others have, and all will reach it. Man will see that he cannot evolve while women are so ill provided by the world that they are sometimes forced to become like Circes, and appeal to men and their lower natures to enable them to live. It is their own attitude to women as a whole that causes women to deceive

them and hinders evolution to a higher life. When men see this and begin to cast off their natural inheritance from the brutes of the earth their bodies are evolving from, then will be an age known as 'the Fairyland of Science.' Others have called this the 'Millennium,' and others 'Heaven.' But this will only come after the race has become ennobled by the proper elevation of woman, and not one is left who would lower herself by deceiving in word, thought or deed, or appealing to men's lower natures to live, but all live to both raise and spiritualise their bodies. Woman has the faculty of seeing things quicker than man by her great intuition. This faculty developed becomes clairvoyance, and thus insight into the designs of Nature. Then she is able to help to lead humanity towards them, putting man upon the right path. Is it not written, 'Woman shall bruise the head of the serpent?' Yet she has been crushed, and is still cheapened, by men. So the serpent is still allowed to bruise her head instead. No wonder the World is in its present state of chaos."

There was not a sound to be heard in the room when the voice ceased. The Countess looked white, cold and immovable, her mouth moving in an automatic sort of manner.

Lucius Macnamary had entered the room and was listening intently.

"Countess," he said, "your ideas have something of Darwinism in them, I fancy. For my part, I will not believe in our descent from animals until I discover proof that language has been ever found, or is possible, in any other animal than ourselves."

"No! no! Darwin could not see God's hand leading us," returned the voice. "But for that, who has placed Humanity upon a higher pinnacle than he? Who has given us Hope? Who has lighted the future with the crystal brilliant lights of hope? Yes! yes! it must be that Christ meant

Heaven to be understood as this grand climax of the perfectly-evolved man. Christianity and Darwinism are both paths of evolution. There are many other paths too, all leading the same way, so it doesn't matter which path one takes as long as one reaches the goal. Christianity has in it science, and is in direct harmony for some minds with all the laws of Nature. Her miracles, which science once doubted, will soon be discovered to be natural processes. It is in its modern phase very Jewish; much of its real beauty is still hidden, but the climax of evolution, Christianity, Science, is reached only when sorrow and strife disappears, and love, brotherhood and peace shall reign supreme. It is the dream of priests of all religions and creeds—each as good in a way one as the other—of poets, prophets, the Inspiration of all writers and thinkers. It is confirmed in the light of modern intelligence and knowledge, and as Christians, or anything else we like to call ourselves, and gird ourselves up for the work of life, our religion should be one and the same—that of love and brotherhood. We may then look forward to the time when in the truest sense the kingdom of this world itself shall become Heaven. How could it be anything else when Love, peace and brotherhood reign supreme, and men have conquered sorrow, strife, illness and pain, because all are the actual results of their own errors, ignorance, sins, hate and malice? Unselfishness sets in motion the great spiritual forces. To disagree entirely with Darwin is to believe we were created by God as we are. What a miserable idea that of never growing better, neither our bodies nor spirits! He has shown us that from developing into what we are to-day from animals we can go on developing until we become perfect, exquisite, glorious creatures, with perfect, subtle bodies, able to travel as quick as light, as thoughts, from one planet to another. Oh! we do not know yet the

delights and glorious happiness Heaven has in store for us; but the worst error, as I said before, retarding this glorious state, is the way man has chained woman, preventing her proper development. By her intuition Heaven would possibly have arrived on earth before this. How many men have said even now that the only Heaven they have found is the presence of some woman they love! But women must all be higher than themselves before they can feel this truth."

It seemed here the Countess's dream or fantasy, or whatever it was, had ended, for the stony stare left her and she began to look herself again.

"Oh! what have I been saying?" she said vaguely. "It is quite in keeping for the conventional mind to deny vehemently that of which it is totally ignorant, and cannot (being unprepared) comprehend. Listen to me again. 'Hands of invisible spirits touch the strings of that mysterious instrument—the soul, and play the prelude of our fate; we hear the voice prophetic and are not alone.' Draw your chairs nearer and now hear the story of my life, although it may seem to you for the moment *apropos de rien!*'"

The Countess leaned forward, rested her elbow on the table, brushing her grey hair over her temple with her fingers in an absent way, as if caressing those time-tinted locks. A medium is a sort of mirror reflecting all the thoughts, ideas and knowledge of those about him.

"Looking back, it seems but yesterday when I was young, beautiful."

There was a suspicion of moisture about the sad eyes that looked over Valerie's head. It is a fundamental principle of spiritual doctrine that those who are present exercise an influence upon almost all spiritualistic manifestations. To-day the one thing needful is cool, dispassionate investigation.

"Well, I had ambitious parents; they sold me for a great name. It seems out of date to talk of this

in these days when the women's movement is at its height of enlightenment and so-called freedom, but to me it is like yesterday. And just as cattle in the market were we women in our youth sold, if not one way—another, and not like cows in the fields to be killed, but to live on to become instruments of convenience—hemmed in, should we try to break our chains when we discover the chains, not the least of them being conventionality, law, that is the present legality of all the modern false laws on marriage."

The Countess Eulalia rose, a tall, regal figure. "Not for the man designed for us by the laws of Nature, which we only learn later, except in rare instances! Imagine me, a beautiful girl, not having left the school-room and my toys, as innocent of wrong and evil as a babe, married suddenly without a word of warning to a French *roué*! When I think of it my heart seems petrified. If men could realise the horror, they would help on all women's movements and make new marriage and divorce laws. As it is, one half of humanity is still catering for the pleasure of the other half, and still expected to. It is the result of the undeveloped imagination. When that faculty is developed in all, and everyone will be able to feel the condition of others as their own, then we shall, must, all love each other, and there will be no sorrow or pain.

"What were we talking of originally? You, Valerie. I think I have been in deep meditation. This is my advice: go your way, take no heed of the dogs that bark at you along that way. Remember that half the things held as just and as law to women have no higher sanction than custom, and are most unfair to them. Find the law of the Universe and then acknowledge no other, but be sure you first find it. All laws at present are not made for you, and are the remains of idiotic notions held long ago by

men to more effectively tie women to slavery and animalism, laws made by those often of less intelligence, of an opposite sex, unable to realise what is suitable for another sex. I took up a newspaper lately, and cut this out from it. Listen! Remember this is a true instance of the state of our fellow-creatures from a daily paper, *The Globe*, in this year of the twentieth century, and shows what the world does for its race-producers.

"At Lambeth, yesterday, C—— E——, flower-seller, was charged on remand with wilfully abandoning her two children, C—— aged three months and A—— aged eighteen months. On the night of the 25th of January there was a ring of the bell at the gates of the Lambeth Workhouse, and upon answering it the porter found a perambulator containing two infants. There was a piece of paper in the perambulator bearing the words, "Left for a time; will call for when a home is provided." The children who were fairly well wrapped up were taken into the workhouse. The baby died in the Infirmary on 12th April, but the elder is still alive and is now in the Norwood schools. Last week the prisoner——"

Here the Countess stopped.

"Notice," she said, "*the prisoner*—this flower-seller of nineteen, with no money or home, called the prisoner. What for? Does it not strike one as callous in the extreme? But I know no more than the papers say." After a moment she continued reading. "Last week the prisoner confessed to a constable in the street, saying she had not been able to get a home together, on account of the cruelty of the father of the children. The workhouse doctor stated the children were clean, and showed no signs of ill-treatment. Mr —— said he would deal with the case, if he had the power but he had not. He committed the prisoner, who was much affected, for trial,

but released her on her own bail. It was understood the prisoner's mother would look after her, pending the trial.'

"Now for the life of me, *I* cannot see what she has done to be called 'the prisoner.' There doesn't seem to be one word about the father, but only of the little flower-seller of nineteen, who seems to have been unable to work to support her children and also look after them at the same time. Should there not be an institution especially for this? Working women are expected to do this: a combination maddening and impossible to the most marvellous brain. No man would, I believe, exist a week under such conditions. The successful execution of such a colossal trial would in a man be considered by his fellows as a feat equal to one of a Hercules. Let us hope in another hundred years the injustice of inflicting the responsibility, support and work for her children upon a woman—illegitimate or otherwise—will be looked upon as a form of past barbarism. Man must see to them, or the country. The country wants to be populated—wants soldiers. There are writers preaching upon the decreasing birth-rate, and women are still required and encouraged to bear children to give her country soldiers for war, and workers—but that she should ever be still responsible for the lives she is forced to bring into the world is awful. Writers preach 'Fecundity.' We listen, and then read without comment of a flower-seller of nineteen who seems to have done her duty nobly to her country, leaving her children at a workhouse door—a very good place I should say, well wrapped up, and cared for and clean, and we stand by and allow her to be called the prisoner. New laws for women must be made, and they cannot be just until they are made by good women who understand and sympathise with the lives of their own sex."

Lucius read the newspaper cutting.

"I notice this is from *The Globe*, June 1901. Is it not?"

"Yes. I only pray in the words of Tennyson," said the Countess,—

"That one good day will fall,
At least far off, at last to all."

"Countess," exclaimed a voice from the doorway, "do you not notice how I agree with you in everything, in Spiritualism, clairvoyance—now in your antagonistic attitude to men? I say it is that of the spider and the fly!"

This was Doris, of course, who was a medium now only for the fantastic impressions of external existence. She entered from the window. The twilight was falling into shadow, the purple-lighted clouds were dying with the day in streams of sapphire and gold, the emerald and crimson light fading from the darkening waters.

Just then Doris saw Lady Vi from the window flirting with the Dean, and it was too much for her gravity. No sense of decency ever restrained her bubbling mirth.

"Sometimes it is the woman who is the fly! and sometimes, Countess, it is the man! It depends entirely upon his income. The process of evolution has had its effect, too, upon Deans. They are no longer interested in deserving, immature young women of the parish chaperoned by anæmic spinsters. In the twentieth century they no longer consider the 'lilies of the fields,' but the 'airy, fairy Lilians' of the boudoir, and even the footlights, when the latter are not entirely monopolised by raw, helpless young peers. They have lost their exquisite translucency of language; they are no longer associated with fogeyism. Intellectual pastimes bore them. Our little special Dean is a good specimen of his kind, adored by Lady Vi and the rest of us for his 'up-to-date' conception of morals, his good temper,

and when not engaged in laudable endeavours to instruct, bound by his iron laws of fashion and custom, and his unadulterated love of baccarat and bridge."

It was unfortunate that the Dean with Lady Vi entered the room, so the hostess and all overheard.

"Oh! my dear Dean, is not that the sort of thing our friends always say of us?" said Lady Ambrose. "Doris is a very naughty girl! She said of Lucius yesterday, before his dear, sweet, good wife, whom I love and admire so much, and who is ever so much too good for him, 'You are a fashionable husband of the roving-eye type, Lucius. A good specimen of the modern married bachelor—a type especially in request at modern house-parties,' and Lucius's laugh was monstrous. Even I felt uncomfortable. She is a dear girl, is Doris, but too outspoken, and consequently makes some enemies."

"Much too outspoken!" replied the Dean, sternly. "The supreme purpose of our life is discipline. She is a strange mixture of forwardness and amusing precocity, but really innocent, in spite of her peculiarities, which sets one wondering. The modern girl is a mystery."

As a matter of fact, the Dean preferred smart young married women—the sort who like to be interviewed by ladies' newspapers, dabble in journalism, and are photographed with their latest baby or their doggy hanging over their back, with baby's little face or doggy's resting against their own delicately-rouged cheek, and enjoy being able to tell all about their pretty homes, their likes and dislikes. He liked that sort of woman—or wax doll—better than Doris. They were not at all outspoken or ever candid, and in their society, he was the sprightliest male figure of the party.

Lady Ambrose had had the huge conservatory arranged now almost as a concert-room, and begged them to come and see the result. It was

crammed with such highly-scented flowers that they had a somnolent effect on nearly all, so they lazily allowed Doris to rattle on.

"Did you ever hear I too once dared to write a nice, really 'realistic' novel?" she was saying to Louis Volvois: "in which trees creaked rheumatically, and budding, blushing belles, newly emancipated from convents, or boarding-schools, met 'polished villains,' only to be rescued in the end—after exciting difficulties—by noble heroes—cast-iron matrimony, of course, always the climax. Papa would not allow me to publish it. He is not a 'Romanticist,' dear thing. Still has a tendency for the dear old stock of Sentiment and Passion, adored by dull and not even a wicked class of readers. 'You do not understand, dear papa,' I said to him. 'You are behind the times.' To be really 'realistic' you must become Zolaesque, and go out into the streets and gaze for an hour or so at a fish-stall or a costermonger's cart—that's the proper way to write nowadays—then come back and try a whole chapter on the various tints and the educative vivacity of a mackerel, or the refreshing seductiveness of a cauliflower. That is realism. You may begin: 'A glorious, divine mackerel, with a skin like the speckled tints in a blue twilight sky, leapt wantonly upon a marble slab.' Then you describe the slab—its beautiful blue veins—and above all, the fishmonger must be the usual hackneyed, iron, unemotional business man. You can tear up his bill—for that's another sort of realism not required so much in these days, of course, especially if you belong to the great vagrant brotherhood. That's a realism that sends a shiver down your spine instead of your pen." Doris rested. As no one else spoke she rattled on again: "It gives you the same sensation as you experience when you have nightmare and dream that a fragmentary fiend is dancing a hornpipe on your chest during the silent

night. Well, of course, I thought my book was a masterpiece. A great friend said it had the design and descriptive phrase of a Hogarth or Callot. But I sent it to a publisher and he said his reader had informed him the style was like making grimaces! It was original. My enemies even couldn't say it wasn't. The heroine was sixty and the hero a centenarian, and of course they and all the other characters had been married and divorced ten times. I took that idea of real life from careful study of the *Morning Post*. How could anyone say that wasn't the right way to work?

"Stupidly I gave up sketches of low life, mackerel, cauliflowers, and burnt the MS. 'You are wise,' said papa, 'to take your only chance of receiving a warm reception!' This was just after the Paris trip. So the true artist in me is wasted now in the pursuit after popular favour. I write now indifferent storyettes, in which the heroines are stagey, notorious, of no importance, celestial, fallen angels, and indeed all sorts. And my love-making?—Oh! my love-making—like nothing met with in this commonplace world, of the most violent but fascinating kind. I am really warring just now between rationalism and idealism. My last heroine was one of those emancipated girls who hated men and didn't want to be married. Innocence in white frills! Papa said then that she spoil the whole book, and that if I went in for realism, why didn't I stick to it, instead of letting my imagination run away with me like that. That he had lived eighty-five years, and I could take his word for it there never was such a creature born! So I had to scratch her out, and I couldn't get no for-ra-der with novels, or publishers, or critics. How do you do it, Louis? You see, papa doesn't treat me fairly with regard to pocket-money, so I told him I'd try literature, as I'd read that 'Sir Conan Doyle' made ten bob a word out of poor dead old Sherlock. Ah! but

I got into even worse troubles with my soul-inspiring heroes than with my publishers. They all had a nasty, horrible way of getting something like people I knew, and ten of my men friends actually mistook themselves for my poor imaginary one hero, who was, as a matter of fact, entirely a heaven-born ideal. It really became most awkward, as so conceited is the present-day mankind, no power in heaven or earth would make them each believe the truth, that I was thinking of someone else all the time. And one man came and asked me to name any sum I liked to make him the hero of my next book. He has a nice castle somewhere in Scotland, by the way, and by that time I was so disgusted that I had to say, for decency's sake, 'Oh! I would want a couple of "thou" on account for a thing like that. You see, it would take so much extra literary style and ability to make *you* even interesting, to say nothing of the years such an undertaking would take from my life.' He has not spoken to me since. Then again, it is necessary for a writer to gain all experience. Realistic love affairs and experiments are, as Mrs Trelawney says, most urgent necessities for the true study of the emotions so as to be able to write correctly. There again, darling papa gets very troublesome, and when my 'studies' get to 'a sort of climax' and interview him, he simply won't believe it's pure study of temperament and character and all that, on my part, for my novels. By the way, it is always permissible, isn't it? for a woman to study the hearts of men, and even break them, if she can, for a broken-hearted man is interesting. But for a man to skip around in the same coquettish, purely experimental manner, to try and study the hearts of women before considering the consequences, is very rash, and even caddish. I have known experiments like that to have the most disastrous results. I could tell you of one which ended in a lunatic asylum, and would make an

exciting novel. The difference is this. Men are strong, and it does them good; but women are weak, and sometimes have a too ridiculous way of believing in them and losing their heads, and then— Well, then— Oh! there's an awful upsetting of the apple-cart! But this is getting away from my story. I took papa's advice, and now, if you please, he says, when I go in for Romanticism, Realism, and Passion, I seem to forget all about Respectability, and that my book would frighten the most timid of bachelors. What he means I cannot understand. I don't aspire to be at all clever, for I consider the greatest Art lies simply in being able to make people laugh at me. That's easy! I have always done that. Thank you, Lucius, that is indeed a nasty one from you. Always personal to the verge of impertinence. I suppose this is your revenge and my just return for christening you afresh 'the Married Bachelor.'"

Doris rested for her usual three minutes to take breath, then she "clacked away" again just like a wind-mill.

"Papa said I had a great deal of false modesty. 'Well, dear,' I told him, 'it is something to have any sort of modesty in these days. I have met many people lately without any at all.' Then I sat and thought for an hour trying to analyse that virtue. 'Papa,' I said at last, 'there must be many different sorts of modesty nowadays; it seems to be a virtue which varies much, according to the rank and wealth of those who possess it.' Now, there's Lady Violet, our mature match-making widow's peculiar sort. We all know it, it needs no description. Then there's the dear old Marchioness of S——'s modesty—she is ninety-two—when she was suddenly awakened by a nasty earthquake shock abroad and sat up for the rest of the night entertaining a party of men in the public garden of her hotel to liqueurs and

cigars. A sweetly pretty picture she made, sitting under the sheltering branches of a maternal orange-tree, clothed in one garter, her jewellery which she had the presence of mind to snatch up, some cobweb garments and a fur rug. She looked just like a South African chief, which mode of toilette was unfortunately described next day in a Society paper as being robed *en chemise*. ‘Papa, there’s false modesty and candid modesty,’ I said. But dear old Tendre would not allow me to continue any discourse upon ‘aristocratic modesty.’ You see papa’s is another phase of the same virtue. The extremely old-fashioned, out-of-date, exploded sort, don’t you know? But about my heroes and heroines, somehow I never could get them to work out into respectable creatures. They always had a way of going wrong and getting into some sort of trouble and difficult situation somewhere about the eighth chapter. Ah! but they were life-like, and, as I told papa, it takes a great woman in this century, I assure you, to be respectable. Dear me, if ever you do meet one by accident, she does look such a queer, mediæval creature—er—doesn’t she?—a sort of ‘hypothesis of a rummage sale’—not at all interesting as a character for a novel. Indeed, indeed, the true artist in me is now dead! dead. I always think of the words of—who was it?—You know them, Louis, I found them in one of your dear books. ‘Humanity is a hero that ever dies and comes to life again. Who ever hates and loves, yet loves the most, who bends like a worm to-day, and soars to-morrow like an eagle in the sun, deserving to-day a cap and bells, to-morrow a laurel wreath, and often both together, the great dwarf, the little giant, the homœopathically-prepared divinity, in whom that which is divine is indeed terribly diluted—but still there.’”

Doris was growing serious.

“Yes, now, I tell you all; it is a paralysing im-

possibility to continue my conversation any more. You must all just entertain yourselves. You must !”

“The evolution of the modern woman has been rapid—very rapid,” began the Dean, solemnly. “In the past one described them all in the mass.”

“And now,” interrupted Valerie Trelawney, “the woman-worker has become so dangerously indifferent to the descriptions and even the opinions of man that—”

“Oh! oh! Mrs Trelawney,” began the Dean, reproachfully.

“Even the *love* of the modern woman has evolved,” murmured Lucius Macnamary. “It seems it has now no shred of illusion. Is that not so?”

“And as for the love of the modern man,” sang out Doris, in her shrill, laughing voice, “ask mamma, and all my chaperones, what that is like. They dragged me about for three seasons and then, I am thankful to say, left me to my own resources. But judging from the love of ‘the ordinary unmarried bachelor,’ and by the present state of the marriage-market, I should say, instead of evolving, it has shockingly degenerated. Why, he has an aversion to matrimony and self-denial, which nothing—I say nothing—well—short of landed property lacking heirs—will remove. Just ask Vi.”

“In this century, Doris,” said Louis Volvois, “the greatest commandment is ‘Love yourself with all your heart, and despise all your neighbours in a less fortunate position than your own.’”

“That’s exactly what I said to mamma,” returned Doris, “I told her the Commandments of Moses didn’t fit in ‘with the present-day ideas and should be renovated.’ It was rash, of course. Mamma could not conjecture the effect of a complete renovation sprung by an up-to-date clergyman upon a sleepy congregation, and said in a shocked voice—‘Doris, you had better go immediately and visit your Aunts

Jane and Maria.' So I had to give orders to 'Funeral Jack,'—that's dear mamma's quiet silly old nag, whom I have so appropriately christened—and away I went. But I continued my argument when I arrived, and—and Aunt Jane is *still* suffering from nervous prostration. So to cheer her, I told her all about the fashionable lady I had seen at a restaurant the day before who had ordered a Chateaubriand steak for her doggie and tied him up by her side at table in an embroidered serviette, thinking to interest her in up-to-date events, she having once possessed an over-fed pug herself. But alas!—no. The prejudice of Aunt Jane is most inconsistent. She was harshly and deliberately unsympathetic and so dull, having caught cold she said the week before by using a damp pocket-handkerchief. But, Aunt Maria. You have not met her yet? Oh, they are all to come, dear Louis. Nothing on earth could equal the subtlety of Aunt Maria's surprises, and she declared my simple white dress was much too bridal for good taste. Oh, she becomes inspired by the most fanciful of ideas! And is as startling as Wagner's harmonies, and what is the most depressing, distressing gift of hers, is her extraordinary faculty for seeing through brick walls. I'm not wanting in desire for enlightenment and natural curiosity myself, but—oh, if you only could know Aunt Maria! She married a curate—because no grisly man had ever yearned for her—who was in the financial circumstances of having the sum of twelve pounds borrowed from a friend for the occasion. It ended in a separation '*à l'aimable*,' and"—

"Doris, dear, you can be only described as a quaint person given to a quick succession of absurdities," said Lucius.

"In whom the elements of sobriety and accuracy are strangely unfindable," added the Dean solemnly.

"Well, originality is valuable always, but—

echoes. Oh!—echoes," said Valerie. "Spare me from mere echoes."

The great communion of life is as certain as breath, that motive power of the universe, and as unperceivable. Like the sky to the earth, down to all the creatures in the air, and 'midst the land and sea-caverned coral. At this present stage the lives of all these people were dominated all alike by sensation, passion and emotion, more than intellect, which is the next stage. In the great play of life, which is for ever repeating itself all through, the actors continually change; and those who have never seen the play before are interested, but there are few who study its depths of meaning. The majority are only looking always for the excitement and pleasure of the moment, until at last the curtain drops upon the closing scene. Then, and only then, they seem to understand the inner meaning. They never realise, until looking backward through the past years, that "the truth of another and better world shines by the side of every path we tread, with such a lustre, he who runs may read."

CHAPTER VIII

THE DÉNOUEMENT

"La farina del Diavolo, va tutta in crusca."

"L'amour et la fumée ne peuvent se cacher."

"I HAVE no wish to speak in riddles. Mrs Trelawney and I love each other."

Thus spake Lucius Macnamary. He had splendid moments, which alone could pardon the rest of his life. Amazement at his boldness was too poor a word to describe the expression on the faces of his listeners. The divine spark had been flung on combustible substance. House-parties are dangerous, because emotions are like powder magazines.

"My dear man, that is a—well—a somewhat startling remark to make before a roomful of people whose morals are all above criticism, and particularly the lady's legal husband," exclaimed Mr Trelawney.

"Pray remember we are forced into certain dimensions by social pressure. I trust you will all refrain from demonstrative expressions while I give you the facts of the case and proclaim our intentions."

"Dear me!" ejaculated Sir Edward Ambrose, almost excited, "this interests me. No one could, I'm sure, call this a dry kind of topic."

"Mrs Trelawney and I are two most unhappily married people, as the world knows. This is a fact you all pretend to ignore. My wife does not love me. She now prefers her violin and all her own interests, material pleasures of life and her own children. I am a ceaseless irritation to her. She, I regret to say, has the same sad effect upon me. Mr Trelawney is

as much a real husband to his wife as—well—I am to mine. So Valerie and I have decided to cast aside idiotic conventions, proven unsatisfactory customs, the greatest of all being a continuation of Marriage when it has proved a fearsome mistake, and to live our own lives openly, together, for the rest of our natural lives.”

“This is too terrible!” exclaimed the good Dean. “I was aware that the World in the new century had become simply a field of experiment. But this!—Oh, shocking! shocking!”

“And in my house?” broke in good Sir Edward Ambrose. “This is quite an unlooked-for departure—a most hazardous experiment, Lucius.”

“La passion fait souvent un fou du plus habile homme et rend souvent habiles les plus sots,” said Andrea Malley.

“Oh! I am sure Lucius has only departed from his usual solemnity and taken to joking. This is a sign that he is getting ripe for eternity,” remarked Doris. “And yet—he has that same lofty expression which goes so well with a perfectly new silk hat. Quite the expression one expects of a best man at a wedding, or of a ‘respectable’ elderly gentleman about to have a memorial erected to him. Dear me, can anyone tell me, When is a joke not a joke?”

Valerie stood facing them and near Lucius. There was not a tinge of colour in her face.

“No, it is true!” she said at last. “I shall love Lucius until the green grass hides me!” Then she lapsed into silence again. Her eyes were set like a Madonna’s, and her delicious red-golden hair flamed gorgeously in the sunlight. Her exquisite tall figure, clothed now in a perfectly tight-fitting *princesse* robe of black velvet, looked like that of the “Venus of Milo.” Her figure was indeed the most perfect they had ever seen, and was now accentuated by the fit of its tight trailing robe.

"My dear Mrs Trelawney! You are impossible. You are like a flower growing in ruin," remarked the Dean, at a loss for a simile.

"No! I have been growing in ruin and darkness all my life before. I am now going to Life, Light and Love!" returned Valerie in self-defence, but not in the least like Mrs Trelawney. It was as if Lucius Macnamary had cast "a spell" over her at last.

Mrs Macnamary put down her violin, which had been resting on her very plump shoulder. She said, in her highest-pitched voice of exasperation: "I can only say that you are both mad."

"No! no!" laughed Doris. "Believe me, dear Mrs Macnamary, they are only—a wee—a wee—bit—Modern!"

Lucius looked at them again for a moment, then spoke out fearlessly. "Man's is a short-lived day. I have known no real happiness until I met Valerie. Until then I knew not Love. Why should we not snatch our happiness while we can? Oh! I must tell you, like a foolish school-boy, how I love Valerie. When she speaks, the air thrills for me with music. My love and passion for her is so strong, when she is not near, banishing away every troublesome thought, there is always in my heart a wild, impatient grief. You are silent. Why? Because you know this is real. That this is no comedy. Would you prefer stolen meetings, clandestine meetings, the vulgarity of the Divorce Court, than to listen to my open confession of this love in me, which thrills with the mellifluous song of unnumbered birds? I would have you know—you who have all up to this day professed friendship for us—that our future is forecast. No barriers can withstand such love as ours."

"Oh! How too sweet!" exclaimed Lady Violet.

Here Lucius stopped and smiled. "And such a future, the most sanguine of dreamers would be disturbed at," he continued.

No one spoke. Whenever a certain amount of energy has accumulated the time arrives when it will be expended, which must induce an effect either great or small. Man's will is not entirely free. Every mental state is the result of previously existing mental states. Man's outward expression changes according to the changes going on in his mind.

They all felt that to speak after such an avalanche of ardour, enthusiasm, delirium of romantic thought, would be too cruel.

At last Mrs Macnamary broke the silence.

"You are a veritable seer, my husband."

"I thought you were a practical naturalist. Instead, you are an absurd, dreamy sentimentalist," said the host, angrily.

"An astonishing departure!" muttered the Dean, that rescuer of female beauty in distress. "Oh, what can I say to you both?"

"Dear Dean, say nothing," insisted Doris. "It will only make them worse. I've had 'the mania' myself, and you've no idea what a goose I made of myself while it lasted. Say nothing. Remember, it is nowadays harder for the clergy to be consistent than policemen. Society and sermons, alas! don't seem now to 'gee-a-wee.' So keep your little sermonette, dear Robert, until the first attack has passed off, or we shall both get the public furies unbottled on our heads, as they are all actually becoming sympathetic—because they both look so romantic and too sweet."

Then the Countess put one arm through Valerie's, and the other on Lucius's shoulder.

"You are both my friends, and both I think, perhaps, a little mad. But, my friends always, whatever views you hold. You are right, whatever views you hold. Anything is better than 'clandestine' love. That is 'he disgrace. In such a case, to love in secret, even in our secret thought, is degrading. How many married

people love other than their own husbands and wives, and while outwardly strictly adhering to their marriage vows, are secretly sighing all the time, inwardly imagining they are martyrs, paragons of perfection, and each thought going out to injure each other more and more every day in a subtle invisible way?"

"Did our great Leader not say, 'Thought is of more importance than action, for it is from wrong or right thinking all our actions arise?'"

"Perhaps you are right. There is no disgrace in loving openly. Better this surely than to both go on acting a lie—the lie acted by half the married world to-day. But take great care, my friends, that when we try to make reforms and to snatch what seems to our earth-crawling imaginations, Heaven, that it will not prove a bitter Illusion, which, if we have attained it, when found is like dead-sea fruit—radiating poison and destruction with it," said the Countess.

"It is fortunate for the hostess that my visit terminates so soon," said Mrs Macnamary. "I leave this afternoon."

"Now I shall stay," exclaimed Mr Trelawney. "I have never felt so amused and interested in anything in my life. I do say I admire your pluck. It deserves a medal at a world's fair. I feel like a clown in a pantomime."

And then, with him, departed all the other philosophers of the smoking-room and men generally known as "Society's diners'-out," all of aristocratic birth, but as regards their characteristics, many of them "bachelors who occasionally used corkscrews for latchkeys." Yet they all considered they were above reproach, because whatever they did, whatever they said, whatever thoughts they had, or views in secret, to the World their lives seemed stainless, and in accordance to this World's conventionalities. Indeed, many of their lives were so burdened with

ennui and contempt of life, that there were times in each when they thought they could endure that existence no longer. Many had made frightful matrimonial mistakes, their lives inwardly like the low tolling of a bell whose song is a sigh, but they smiled, and went on acting their parts outwardly on the World's stage, year in and year out.

Lucius Macnamary had persuaded Lady Ambrose to suggest a meeting of all her guests, and when assembled, he had actually been brave enough to declare his love for Valerie Trelawney. He informed them that he had ordered his yacht to be near at the termination of their visit. That they intended sailing away together quite openly before them all, he having made all the preparations. "They preferred to take the step openly than in secret," he said, "and to take the consequences whatever they would be."

Although Lady Ambrose and her husband held progressive, "up-to-date" views, and were both the very soul of kindness and generosity, they were not ready, or sufficiently advanced for such an unconventional proceeding in the middle of entertaining their party. It was not on their programme. However, they were extremely fond of Lucius and Valerie, declaring often that they were the greatest of all their friends.

Cleverly Sir Edward let no one know his opinion, only saying to the men in the smoking-room, "An emotion is either a virtue or a vice, according as it is applied. Misapplied virtues become vices and well-directed vices may become virtues."

So they held themselves neutral, until they could become, if ever, more accustomed to all the new twentieth-century ideas of the World, aping "cross-Atlanticism" as regards Marriage and Divorce. But for all that, somehow, the news spread to the newspapers — the press saw its significance. It was as a problem—

a possible solution of the difficult marriage problem. And in this case it seemed unusually clear—that is, there seemed no difficulties, no children, for each of their own to snatch at, or cut into halves, or to steal and stow away for the woman across the seas to good America, that land of woman's liberty. Half the world wondered if the other half would remain friends of the brave, progressive pair. It exaggerated, of course. One entertaining, enterprising journal, later, said Mrs Trelawney was giving a grand ball to celebrate their betrothal, and even fixed for them the time of their departure. Photographers and reporters arranged to stand at the railway station. But gradually it was realised outside that their open candour was meeting the approval of all London, which is so distinctly lunatic as regards its sensations.

The only thing they did not discover was the truth, for in these days, of course, "truth" is the only real news—and the cause of the delay. They had promised the Countess Eulalia to wait for her great *séance* which she was especially organising, to ask the advice of the spirits on their behalf, before taking the final step, and for this they all waited. For truth is never believed nowadays, because it is clothed so quickly in the latest mode.

Experience is the law of life, the law of growth. Life is an Art. It is necessary that we should gain every experience possible, each in various ways, for every problem we meet in our daily lives, to bring each our Knowledge to the whole. Unless experience is gained, we who live in a world of law cannot learn it. It should be plain, however, by this time: there are only *two* ways in which Nature impresses itself on man,—pain, when the law is opposed, pleasure and happiness when followed. In everything now, we require wisdom to reform, not anger to punish, which is the only way the world knows at present by which

to deal with these grave questions. Discrimination between right and wrong cannot grow unless we have experience of good and evil to guide us. There are some things that weaken and diminish life, others that increase it. All happiness and growth lies in obedience to the law of this, there is no manner of doubt. Ultimate right and ultimate happiness are inseparable, but we have to discover, each for ourselves, what is right for each of us, and what really does lead to real happiness.

The development of a plant reaches its climax in the development of its root or seed. The intellectual and spiritual development of man goes on and does not reach its climax often until after the physical form is on its downward path, and sometimes even until that ceases to live. Wisdom, Power, Love, Truth, Justice, and Knowledge, must nourish us by their harmony, otherwise we cannot rise above the delusion of form, separation, and personality, or know good and evil. But the attributes that raise us above the level begin only at the stage when external appearances cease to be of any consequence. We smile condescendingly at the Socialist and reformer who endeavours to re-arrange circumstances—when he fails. But the reason of his failure is often because what he tries to re-shape are the effects of causes forced to arise out of human nature itself.

All alike we must learn the great lessons of life. *Ask in truth and we shall all receive the truth. One step towards progress means growth. The materials of which superior man is constructed are the emotions of the Spirit. The builder is Love ; will and reason the superintendent and workman, wisdom the supreme architect. In order to grow into the higher manhood, it is desirable that one have strong emotions, provided one has sufficient will-power to control them. A person devoid of them is without virtues or vices. He is ut energy ; a shadow and useless. The passionate*

man is nearer to God than he who has nothing to control, nothing to conquer. Man's love and intuition do not belong to earth. They create energies active beyond the confines of the grave until it becomes exhausted of its lower instincts, when the purified ray or reflection is freed from earth. "La vraie science et la vraie étude de l'homme c'est l'homme!"

CHAPTER IX

THE GREAT SÉANCE

"Spirit Power begins in directing animal-power to other than egoistic ends."

"The unseen world is destined to become like a newly-discovered continent; we shall visit it, we shall hold communion with it, we shall wonder how so many thousands of years could have passed without our being introduced to it. It is open to every man who can become attuned to the natural harmonies of divine law. If a musical instrument be out of tune, the most skilful performer cannot elicit music from the chords."

"—H. W. . . . the T."

IT was the evening of the Countess Eulalia's *séance*. Her friends and others, some interested outsiders with a comparatively complete sense of awesomeness had assembled in the shaded library. Some were believers, all grave, reverent, as befitting the respect they had for her earnestness and the undeniable seriousness of the investigations. The guests of the party who had not joined this circle were amusing themselves singing, some intent on cards or chatting in various groups in other portions of the house and hall. Seated with the Countess were the host, the Dean, Andrea Malley, Doris, Valerie, Lord Selbrook and his wife. The latter couple lived near. He was a serious Scotchman, who devoted himself to two studies, one of ancient MSS. in the British Museum, written by fat and portly authors of bygone centuries, and the other of mummies and good dinners. He had become nearly blind as a result of the former, and now wore bright blue glasses, creating a vivid

contrast to his fiery red hair and beard of the same warm hue. His wife was a huge portly dame, who almost lived in an old grey homespun coat and skirt, attended nice dog-shows, wearing hobnailed boots, a nursemaid's sailor hat, carrying a stinging-looking whip, and followed by a herd of bull-dogs. She had once been a lady doctor, then principally urging upon her patients the necessity of wearing flannels for eight months in the year as a cure for colds and hereditary insanity, and wore herself dresses of tweed on one side and waterproof the other; spending the rest of her day between writing death certificates, and saying good-bye for three hours to a pet fox-terrier.

"The lady to inspire me with confidence and courage!" Valerie had whispered to the Countess the day before, "So do ask Lord Selbrook to inveigle his wife to your *séance*. She is the sort of wife to tackle a burglar while the admiring 'hubby' praises her bravery—"

"Beneath the bed-clothes in his latest complexion-mask!" had answered irrepressible Doris.

They were nearly all careless people, little dreaming of the realities that lie unseen to physical eyes all around us, or dreaming that what they called the Countess's eccentricity was gradual mental illumination to things in a higher world or plane. In silence, God speaks to the heart of man. This is the true state of active "clairvoyance"—or illumination, and is very different from the ordinary "clairvoyance" of the day, or the "spiritualism" which are made articles of commerce. All outward phenomena in Nature, in plants, birds, oceans, continents, and developments of human associations all flow from inward, spiritual, unseen sources of Causation.

A light Chippendale table had been provided of the right size for seating around it, in a perfect circle, the number of guests present. There was silence. They

knew the good Countess was in her element, and waited like a group of children to hear her voice, knowing so well her moods, and they thought it not unlikely she would begin by giving them an impassioned tirade on the decadence of the age.

"My friends, I propose holding this *séance*," she began solemnly, "hoping to convince the unbelievers among us, but not for that purpose, or as a test—but to gain Knowledge and advice in our many problems." Here she unconsciously looked at Lady Selbrook, a defiant figure in the hackneyed, harsh, black evening frock and the conventional row of pearls buried in her hanging double chin.

"I will pray if it is the wish of our departed or higher evolved ones, for information for the advancement of our race. In my opinion, spirits become consultative and advisory bodies; in another generation or two, the knowledge of this will be of immense service to the world. The relationship of the living in the flesh is very near to our dear departed ones living in the spirit. We are alike, all living, except that they have often progressed further and before us have cast off an encumbering cloak, that in which we are each of us here enwrapped—the coarse, fleshy matter of the physical plane. Still the majority are so far yet from the state of perfection to which we are all destined to develop, and thus not all spirits coming to a circle can reach us, others cannot advise us truly: please send us the right ones."

She shaded the lights and seated herself at the table. She began with a beautiful prayer, so affecting her listeners as they bent their heads, that they devoutly followed her train of religious thought. But in the end, when their leader thought it right to utter a devout aspiration for the peace and rest of all departed spirits, Lucius looked at Valerie. She saw he considered this somewhat inconsistent with holding a *séance* he believed was for the purpose of

recalling them. It seemed to them and unbelievers like stretching probability to a bursting point, but curiosity seemed to fill the cracks of their mundane existence, so they remained.

"Oh, ye spirits! who are permitted to do so much to mould the destinies of people and countries, who have lived good lives on earth, whom our Creator has made into channels for His purposes, whose moral influence is a far more potent force in this world than we dream of, by the side of which physical power sinks into utter insignificance—Come to us now! Influence us to mould our destinies, not to give us individually more advancement and happiness here, but to put us on the right path, and to help the advancement of all humanity, and to assist in the eventual peace of the world."

Then she asked various questions, trying to discover what spirit was beginning to influence the circle. At first the *séance* seemed likely to prove tedious, with the spelling of words and conflicting magnetism, but the enthusiasm of the one who held it, her belief in the spiritual messages to come, seemed at last to pervade all. Whatever it was, strange sounds and manifestations were decidedly to be heard.

Andrea Malley had placed his carefully-finished person on a chair next to Doris. Every few moments he turned and looked in her face, noticing before the others how strangely excited she had become.

"Whatever is on the jump now?" she whispered to him.

Suddenly he moved his hand, and remarked:

"This is so slow, Countess! If spirits from other worlds desire to communicate, how rude and burdensome must seem your method! Rapping tables, spelling words, are surely as wearisome as teaching a baby to speak. I am a believer in Spiritualism, and have attended the most advanced *séances* in Europe. Let us give them better conditions. I feel convinced

Doris would make an excellent medium. If she has no objection, shall we try?"

"I have always felt I should be a good medium. If you are sure no evil influences will touch me, I should like to be of use. I have such wonderful dreams. I see things in them which always happen. This, I hear, is 'Clairvoyance.' When I am sleeping it seems to me my soul is more wide-awake and alive than when I am really awake. Also, then, it has more power of memory; it appears to me my soul then remembers portions of its past life throughout the ages before it was encased in this present body of this generation. Indeed, in spite of all persuasion to the contrary, I shall always believe this. The other day I went to sleep and dreamed I was dancing along some fields in a Roman frock with bands of gold on my arms. Suddenly I saw a huge green snake about to spring, the next moment I felt it upon my throat, and as the reptile wound itself around me, I awoke. The knowledge then came to me that while I was sleeping my soul had been looking over the past, and, through memory, lived again those moments of terror it had undergone in a former life. The knowledge of this came from within me. I know that once I must have died like that, having suffered indescribable moments of terror, my soul had escaped from the coils of a huge snake and left my body there on the grass in its sickening clasp—dead. From a child I was never able to look at a picture of a snake without a vague remembrance that I had suffered unspeakably through one. A few days after this dream, or rather this remembrance of my soul looking backward, which had shaped itself in my waking brain, I was left an ancient manuscript. It had belonged to a centenarian uncle and was a record written by the heads of the family, handed down from generation to generation. I began to read at the beginning

with interest, it was written on old parchment, and so musty were the first histories! To my amazement and delight I read of the death of an ancestor two thousand years ago—a girl, who had gone into the sunlit fields to meet her lover, and had been attacked by a huge green snake, dying of the fright. I must have been reincarnated into the same direct line of family again. Since then, I have longed to know more of the past history of my soul. Lately I only seem to get visions of the Future, not of the Past. And now I feel the same drowsiness coming over me, I feel I must sleep. If you can gain any information from my spirit pray use me. The spirit is shrined in this outer body of mine which you see and I when I look in the glass, with its own inner unseen spirit-body attached, indestructible throughout the ages. If another good spirit should come to influence and speak through me, do not attempt to wake me, but if an evil earthy one, send it away. Pray for the presence of the good."

"Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
From that true world within, we see
Whereof our world is but the bounding shore."

now sang Doris. But, curiously, her voice seemed changed. It was certainly not her own, but a deep, musical man's voice. Then she sat in a lounge chair, and in a few moments was asleep.

"I have never heard Doris talk in this way before," said Valerie, alarmed.

"It is curious," said Lucius, the sceptic. "Yet, I may be mistaken. Her keen imagination, the fact that she believes herself a medium, may account for it. It will be a good experiment. I shall be interested, I think, without taking active part. I have often thought that events, ideas, views belonging to our past lives and of our ancestors, can be conveyed to our sensibility in some mystic, occult

manner. This is one manifestation of the good spirits perhaps desiring to communicate with someone in the room, in haste to speak, considering our plan, as Mr Malley said, of rapping too slow, so they have sent Doris into this sleep. It resembles those trances we read of in the Scriptures, does it not? People profess to believe in the Bible, but decry anything approaching its phenomena in the present day."

"You see a change is passing over her face," exclaimed Andrea. "I suspected Doris was a medium from what she said of her clairvoyant power. The soothsayers and oracles of old were simply clairvoyants. Does anyone seriously wish to ask a question? Spirits do not work on lines laid down for them by us, undeveloped spirits in the flesh."

Simultaneously with his last word they all became conscious of a delightful perfume diffused in the air, and then a cold, disagreeable influence. Doris now became restless. There was a loud rap at the farthest end of the room.

"This is better," said a new, strange voice. "It is exceedingly tantalising for an intelligent spirit to make itself heard through the medium of chairs and tables."

"Who is speaking?" asked the Countess.

"A famous scientist, good lady." The answer coming from the lips of Doris, but in a voice totally unlike her own.

"Ah! So we shall hear something worth hearing," said the Countess. "Possibly a scientist who died years ago?"

"No, no, no! not dead at all! Much alive. Nobody dies except, perhaps, bad, sensual people, who may be said when in their material state on your planet (our plane) to deliberately kill their souls, that is kill themselves. Have you not heard that a sensual or intemperate body is the coffin of a dead

oul? Read, mark, learn, inwardly digest the truth of the statement."

"Our departed friend has a droll way of speaking," murmured the Countess. "What becomes of us when we die, that is die, as we express ourselves here?"

"I am glad you said that, for no one dies. Why, what happens? Oh, nothing particularly exciting. Contrary to expectations, we go on living, being educated, progressing quicker, more satisfactorily than before, not inconvenienced by fleshy cases. Our next body is so much more perfect and agreeable. What degenerate cases they are in this century on earth! They were, I am thankful to say, a shade better in my time, because we lived more healthy lives and were not so saturated with alcohol. However, I'm not here to preach, but to answer your questions and assist you, so that future spirits taking material form may find your world a more comfortable place to return to. Do not detain me longer than you need. This atmosphere is not congenial to me. I was greeting a dear friend, making an appointment to explore with him a somewhat uninhabited planet. We have made an invention, are due to try it two hours from now, counted by your time."

Lucius looked hard at the sleeping girl. This sounded rather like Doris.

He assured himself, however, that she was genuinely asleep, in a trance. "How can you get so quickly from one planet to another?" he asked.

"Think of the swiftness of light. That is how spiritual-bodies travel."

"Who are you, may I ask?" enquired Lady Selbrook.

There was silence for an interval. It seemed curious after the quick responses, the "spirit" should take longer to answer this.

"It is a difficult question to convey to your minds who I am. You see our indestructible souls, yours and mine, are so old. One has to look back through countless ages to answer. You are so satisfied that you each know who you are. You, Countess, once your 'spirit' left its fleshy case, or, to use your worldly expression, you died, and your soul required many more incarnations before beginning such an education as I am enduring now, and because it was then designed, that you should enter a body again, and be born again, as a little child, you fancy you are that child grown up, the Countess Festetics only. You, Lucius Macnamary, imagine you are only that personality, foolish enough to think that the Divine essence in you, known as your soul, only began its existence when you were a baby, about forty years ago, that it dates from that time only. How childish. You, known in the present day as Lucius Macnamary, I am your friend. You are so dull and undeveloped you do not recognise, or even remember me. Once we were brothers together, living hermits'-lives in an old monastery. We were, oh such friends, long ago. I know so much of the history of your past life, for you and I are very old. I am nearly as old as Adam, and you not much younger, that is why I have finished my last earthly incarnation. This will nearly be your last too. I wonder what would you say were I to relate some of your soul's history to you, show little clairvoyant pictures through the mind of your friend asleep. What would the world say, if I told them Adam and Eve are both on earth at the present time, and well-known figures in your social world of London, themselves little dreaming they were the prototypes of a race on this planet?"

"I should be immensely interested if you could point them out to me. But will you answer the question—Who are *you*?" returned Lucius.

"I—well—I once was known as a Roman king.

In another planet or later life, I was a poet and writer. You often read my very old books now. Last time I was on earth they said I was a 'great scientist.' Oh, how I laugh now to think of it, because I happened to make one little discovery the world had known so well ages before, but had happened to forget in that century, and one day the memory of my soul became clearer to my physical brain, and a thought of it came to me—they said it was a great discovery, made by me. All the heads in the country began to think the same. I will give you the initials of my last name."

A piece of paper was then passed to the girl, and a hand, certainly not hers, reached out and wrote some letters of the alphabet.

The paper handed around caused excitement because all thought of the same name. Lucius now became keenly interested, for there was no mistaking the genuineness of this *séance*. That misty, ethereal-looking hand belonged to one who had passed over the border, and he was about to ask a question, but was forestalled by the Countess.

"Can you tell us the greatest question of the day? One most necessary to solve in this century for the good of mankind?"

There was perfect silence in the room for fully five minutes, then the medium became convulsed, and the same deep voice was heard to say emphatically,—

"The prevention of insanity."

"Is that the greatest?"

"It is before all others now the most necessary to be solved."

"How can it be prevented?"

"By help of Professors of Psychology, committees for the detection of degenerates, and by new, firm, rigorous laws regarding the sale of alcohol, eventually abolishing it altogether. By new laws for women. Charitable people build asylums and hospitals for

the insane and diseased, losing sight of the fact that 'Prevention of all things is better than cure.' Then the lives of all women in every home should be carefully examined. Many women are driven insane by their home life, sometimes by their own relations, and especially by the jealous, evil minds of other women with whom the circumstances of their lives sometimes place them."

"The next of importance?"

"The Elevation of Woman. The Creator has endowed her with wonderful Intuition, or 'Soul-Knowledge.' With this, developed, she should be quicker at discovering the causes of the errors of the world. Her memory cultivated would bring to light many of Nature's laws, known previously."

"What is the next question?"

"The proper housing of the poor, instead of the housing of worthless, decayed, but vastly expensive objects and relics in great museums. These, and the churches and cathedrals, would provide innumerable bedrooms for the roofless."

All who watched Doris's face thought she was about to awake. A change passed over it. Instead, they heard a peculiar ringing laugh.

"Can you tell us how this question is to be solved?" someone asked.

"Oh, easily!" exclaimed a new laughing voice, which astonished them by the change.

"This is a serious question to us," said the Countess, reprovingly. Turning to Lucius, she whispered, "I am afraid our circle is being influenced by a mischievous nature spirit, whom I recognise—'an imp with fiery eyes and brimstone smell.' However, I still hope for a satisfactory reply to this very important question—listen."

"By appreciating the rent-paying qualities of—Porkers."

"What!" exclaimed Lady Selbrook as if she had

received a shock. The answer was wholly unexpected by them both.

"Please explain yourself, sir," said her husband.

"It is—the Pig," was the succinct reply of the spirit, in a slightly shrill voice, "that noble, well-bred animal who will solve the problem of the housing question in a more practical, satisfactory manner than many of your Members of Parliament. By appreciating the rent-paying qualities of porkers I say again. The pig despises vapoury brains: 'Simply manage me,' says he to the poor man, 'and I will pay your rent.' If the opinion of a little feminine spirit from another world is of any use to you, believe me, it has more reason in it than half the grand Parliamentary speeches. The pig doesn't want to house the poor man, and get any percentage, five or six, for himself, or tax the poor man, or make up the deficiency caused by an imperfect scheme, by rates, thus taxing in many instances even poorer people than the much-discussed poor themselves, the harassed, lower-middle-class house-holder, struggling to keep up respectable appearances. 'Get back to the land,' says the pig, 'to agriculture, to farms,' and 'manage me.' Ah, what a queer world it is. Thousands of pounds collected for building new churches, memorials, monuments, hospitals, and yet the difficulty of building little huts for its human creatures,—Unsolved. They should come before hospitals, which would then be rendered unnecessary. Women are still left, many with only one means of livelihood, chiefly that of appealing to men and their lower natures. Oh, the sadness of it. Its want of brotherly sympathy, is enough to make us come down and frame some scheme ourselves for taxing wealth and inequalities of fortune, out of existence, and turning museums, churches, hospitals, into hotels for the poor."

"Perhaps you will now go on to the next," suggested Lord Selbrook, nervously.

"Well, the compulsory higher education of every woman. Women have had drawbacks and mill-stones around their necks long enough. Education removes all evils. They have never yet been sufficiently prepared for their 'battle of life.'"

Lord Selbrook began now to join in. He was of the old school, progressing slowly.

"But there has been a law laid down from time immemorial for men and a special one for women. In my opinion, this is as it should be. For man, the labour—for woman, wifehood, motherhood, child-bearing. This is Nature's law," said he.

"But not for the World as it is now, vile and wicked, when none of Nature's laws are followed, and no one lives a natural life. That is an ideal which can only be followed with good results in a world that is good and just, and not full of sin and maladjustment. In it, at the present day, women have often to labour for existence and have the child-bearing as well. Because woman is weaker, is it not natural and reasonable she should be even more securely armed to fight the world? But men, up to the present, have, instead, taken all the arms from her, and have designed to leave her with no other weapon than her youth and appearance. We know you. In your present life your soul is called Lord Selbrook; in your last life your soul lived in the body of a woman, in the next, of a very ordinary man, who became a confirmed old *roué*. Your victims among women were innumerable. Yes, victims, I say. You need not wince, the misery and maladjustment your sins and selfishness caused in that existence is appalling, and the evil still in existence as effects."

"I protest!—I *protest*!" exclaimed Lord Selbrook, rising from his chair. "Someone is playing tricks—tricks in bad taste too. I will see to this—I declare I will see to this! I never was—a woman."

"And your soul," continued the deep voice, unmercifully, "still holds lingering memories and ideas of that latter life. There are many such undeveloped animal natures as yours still in the world, full of coarseness, mockery and cruelty, veneered over with flattery and politeness, who try to drag down woman always from the position the Creator has designed her to rise to. The first moment you see her—and this is often caused by the errors of her male relations—forced to take her own part, like man, in sheer self-defence, or doing real work in the world, not from an unwise and absurd desire to unsex herself, but because she is absolutely bound to do so through the present bad arrangement of the world and her present limitations—such men as you often taunt her with unsexing herself—the usual jest. This does you credit, considering she brought you into the world. Every time you sneer at a woman, and thus try to cheapen all womanhood, by thought or speech alone, you are helping to throw dirt into the face of your own mother."

Now, if there was one good point in the character of Lord Selbrook, it was his love and reverence for his mother. He did not ask another question, but murmured in his Scotch accent,—“I—I—I throw—dirt—in my mother’s face, oh—preposterous!” He was like most other men, forgetful of the fact that every woman is someone’s mother, or wife, or sister, or daughter.

“To change the subject, what do you consider the greatest aim to further the advancement of the race?” asked Lucius.

There was a silence again for some moments. Then the reply,—

“First—let man grasp the fact that he is in a state of progressive degeneration. He must then get at the cause of this, and see for himself that the first question of vital importance for the proper evolution

of man's brain and subtle faculties, and thus for his true progression in the physical world and on his own path of advancement is to—absolutely abolish alcohol. This should be his first thought, thus preventing insanity and further degeneration. Always study causes, not effects. Then mankind will develop more rapidly, to a degree undreamed of at present by the ordinary man, with wonderful faculties of mind, faculties he in his ignorance now associates only with miracles and saints; but little does he dream of his undeveloped faculties for delight and intenser enjoyment. If nothing deters this improvement of the human race, and it gets really on the right path Nature intends, then man will gradually evolve into a higher species, when the man who touches alcohol, and thus dulls and stupefies his brain, the most precious organ of his whole instrument for advancement, or in any other way gratifies any of his material senses, will be regarded as a brute. The aim of man should be to search and find and follow Nature's laws until he feels he is improving physically, mentally, and morally, when will come of their own accord, quite naturally, these wonderful powers and faculties. Mankind will grow more spiritual than material, the subtler, purer, finer vehicles, or bodies, developing, and man himself not confined and limited as now to one side—the envelope, that coarser envelope of the physical world, but gradually coming in touch with the inner real worlds; until he comes in touch with us, and is working with us in perfect harmony, in the astral and mental and higher planes, while for his own purposes still retaining his hold on his physical body,—for work in this is needed on the grosser physical plane, the coarse outer world which is the only one you see nearly all in the flesh—yet see and admit as the real. Then man will kill out the animal in him. Away with your soulless, idiotic customs. Can you not see that by remaining more animal than

spiritual you are missing all Nature's marvellous prizes and fruits and blessings? Go to the flowers. Do you think a Creator who designed such spiritual things out of the very same essence of the same universe as that with which He built you, meant you to remain in your savage, material state, whilst giving you such things to remind you again and again of that Divine essence from which He created you? He gave you them on the physical plane, although they are of a higher one, to try and speak to and teach you this, and to enjoy and to make yourselves beautiful and harmonious like them. You—you—creatures still with the lust of war and barbarism in you, war bringing every day with it the tragedy of lives cut short by the cruel murder of your guns, your Christ meant more than real clothing, when He told you to consider the 'lilies of the field.' He meant you to take your model from them, to become spiritually and beautifully clothed as they are, each so different—you, too, by your various characteristics, your wonderful individuality, a wonderful multiplication of beautiful species, like the flowers all lovely, yet each so different. Reaching spiritual perfection you will each be exquisite and varied, bodily and mentally as they. This is no particular religion that I know of; it is simply the certain result of Natural Evolution, following strictly Nature's laws, as you discover them, but if you like to call it Christianity, well, it is one and the same thing, but do not forget that the great souls of more advanced worlds are positively within the earth's atmosphere, as mighty, spiritualising forces."

"Oh, how delightful!—if we could only develop wings! Could we?" whispered Valerie.

"When that stage is reached, you will not wish for wings to move about on your physical plane, because you will move anywhere in your subtler bodies, only changing your hours—by night, in your subtle body—by day, using your physical one, that is generally,"

was the quick reply. "But, on the other hand, you would be able to develop, materialise anything you liked, and go anywhere at any time when perfect. But you can't develop, or progress, until your Love is—true Love, that is pure love—without one thrill of passion, of selfishness, of baseness. The soul forces cannot be focalised except by the emotion of higher love."

There was a long silence. Then the Countess asked,—

"What is the next step onwards?"

"Improve your marriage laws, and indeed all your laws in the twentieth century."

"Oh, how? Are you going to solve the marriage problem for us?"

"Marriage should be forbidden by government and the laws of the country between those unsuited for each other. Heredity should be deeply studied. A severe investigation and examination should first be passed. Marriage should be a very difficult ceremony to arrange; forbidden by law for merely pecuniary reasons, for mere position, convenience, or between those of an unsuitable age. There should be a wise man and a wise woman appointed at every church or registry, and clergymen should be the judges of considerable experience, seers of good, pure, saintly life, and should carefully inquire into all proposed marriages before officiating at them. Surely in the Christian churches and others such priests exist. Marriage except between those whose nature is analogous and in perfect harmony and affinity is a violation of Nature's most inexorable laws, and creates the most abominable confusion in the physical, astral and mental planes, or worlds, and should be forbidden by the churches. It drags awry the entire perfect harmonious plan of God's united universe, brings nothing but evil and disharmony in a world He intended to be all harmony and bliss."

"But I protest!" interposed the Scotchman, "I protest. No one marries without love. The thing is preposterous, unwholesome."

"Sir," returned the voice, "look at home! Did you not yourself marry once—your first wife—a Scotch lady? Was she not possessed of more gold than other attractions? Did he not? I ask the company present? She is here—to now speak for herself—that is the difficulty of second marriages, the meeting the first spouses on the other side. The Catholic Church is right in disapproving of them."

"Dear me," said the Countess, "I am afraid we are getting too personal. Shall we go on to another question and discuss this some other evening?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the voice. "No one appreciated the joys of a flirtation more than I did when on earth, but I did in the end marry for pure unsophisticated love and not pure gold."

Lord Selbrook had now grown very red. His second wife had been a rich Canadian woman with an immense fortune, had only lived five years, leaving it all to him, and he spoke of her very rarely to his present good wife—this severe type of English sportswoman.

"I am afraid we are being influenced by that mischievous spirit again," said the Countess. "Shoo!—Shoo!—fly away, dear."

"Oh, you stupid thing in the flesh. But what matter if you are at present 'dust of earth,' protoplasm, carbon or hydrogen. You all think you can love, and you know nothing yet of true love and of the soul's seven senses. But I am not so easily 'shoo'd' and made to fly away. Having summoned me without taking into consideration the power of a disembodied spirit, I intend to remain until I have given you my message. It is for two people in this room, and I shall not leave until I impress it upon their minds."

"Two people in this room?" repeated the Countess.

She looked at Valerie Trelawney and Lucius Macnamary. It was curious, she acknowledged to herself, that she had told Valerie the previous evening she would ask the advice of the spirits regarding their position. "What was the last question asked?" she inquired. "Ah, relating to marriage. This reminds me of the reason of my *séance* to-night. Pray come and instruct us. I have now an important question to ask you, good advisory spirit. I will write it."

She wrote on an ivory tablet: "Will you advise us as to the position of Valerie and Lucius, and the final solving of the marriage problem in this time of bad marriage laws and abominable divorce, where the poor woman or man has to run the risk, when they have been properly and suitably disgraced before the world, of their divorce being rendered complete and absolute by the more clever successful side? Should they, on behalf of themselves and progress, and all others similarly placed, cast aside all ties and conventions, and live together? You see here four unhappily married people. Two love each other to distraction. Now, would it not be the most sensible, reasonable step, for these two to go away and spend their lives together, thus leaving the other two to be happy, or at least free also, and to live as they like? Better this, surely, than four people living in misery, and, as you say yourself, not in affinity, which is contrary to the good laws of Nature, from which should arise only happiness, love, pleasure, harmony." This was passed to the medium.

"This is the problem for which I have been waiting," was the reply. "Your friends' position is 'criss-cross' enough for the stage. But the answer is not for me to decide now. Marriage should certainly only be between those whom the Creator has ordained for each other. All contrary is a violation of the law, and brings untold maladjustment. Yet

if you could grasp that everything is ordered in spite of this, and definitely linked with everything else in the great Chain of Causation, then you might grow to understand also something of Fate. The reason war, above all other errors, is such a disarrangement of this deific plan, is that among other evils it disarranges the proper balance of the sexes. Consequently, tens of thousands of men and women ordained for each other never meet in the physical world. Woman gets cheapened, scorned, and in a huge majority. This alone is an enormous obstacle to her in her struggle for existence. Yet what country has ever deplored the evil of war from a woman's standpoint? Only the loss of money, which the bloodshed causes, but never the loss of natural protectors for their women. No recompense for her in this disarrangement. From this wrong balance come all social evils, prostitution, from man's greed, man's lust of war, but he is careless still regarding everything detrimental to his women. But my message is to one named Valerie. Remember—

"Character is a plant of slow growth, because it draws from the soil and air without and the conscience within. It is a wood of dull grain, but capable of a most beautiful polish. Before deciding on this grave problem. Go, spend some time with the very ignorant, the poor, the unfortunate, filthy portions of humanity. Strive to know thyself. Try to assist in discovering the true meaning of life. Go and see for yourself the great contrast between luxury and want. You know so little of the evil of the world, which—by the way—is really not evil but—error. You have lived the life of a silly, petted doll. Go first out into the World, see it in its darkness and moral degradation. Learn the struggles for existence women, quite as helpless and attractive as you and your friends, have to experience, which if men were more evolved they never would allow them to know. Then try, first, before ponder-

ing again on such problems as you have chosen, to discover, if you can, where the difference lies between an invidious life of fashion, with its accompanying vices, habits, morals, and what is called the shameless vice of those upon a lower step of your absurd social autocratic ladder. Seek out a woman of that class, most scorned, known to you as being most immoral, filthy, abhorrent, against whom the scorn and contempt of the whole world is set unquestionably, on whose head, without a trial of any sort, only women's scandalous tongues are always pouring volumes of invective. Then study her as a human creature with the same right to the world and whatever happiness there is to be found in it as yourself. Study her, as a human soul sent into the world, as yours was, from an invisible one, but unlike yours, placed in some horrible, crushing environment, often hemmed in and around by wicked people, perhaps without knowledge or education. Recognise the impotence often of the individual to shape events, consider the awful inabilities of women, finally study the for, and against, as you would a mathematical or other problem, and when at last her real character stands out with marvellous good qualities, for we are all germs of divinity, then and only then, scorn or admire her. That is, if you ever dare to scorn a human soul placed in the form of a woman. Remember! the more degraded are often the more sinned against by man and the world. Later, after you have well studied human nature, you will be able to decide for yourself what you should do. If you follow this plan of life, what your inner voice then prompts will solve the problem you are now dealing with."

The medium appeared to be evolving the sixth sense, the first sense of the soul-world, intuition, and the power to look into the minds of others. The seventh sense brings "clairvoyance," "clairaudience," "inspiration," and "semi-entrancement."

As the voice ceased Lucius said: "Do you think the world will ever become organised and get out of its present chaos?"

"God is Order. 'The Devil is Disorder, and sits in contemplation endeavouring to cross principle,'" was the very strange reply. "This means that good and evil are forces that work for Evolution, necessary, and one the complement of the other. When the world is no longer the seat of quarrels and bloodshed, but a planet governed by universal love, peace, and brotherhood, when men are raised above bull-dog instincts, tearing each other to death, and there is fairness for all women alike, then it will begin to be organised. Now horrible acts of injustice are committed in the name of justice, error proclaimed as truth, forms, and theories mistaken for principle. But to continue my message to Valerie. *Go and see the other side of the picture.* The World is overflowing still with ignorant women, instilled with the notion they must suppress themselves for the 'superior' man. See the result of this. Here is a Realistic illustration. There was a meeting yesterday at — Hall, to discuss the ways of raising funds for 'a haven for homeless little ones.' I was there, although none was aware of my presence. I wished to see how the world was advancing and I journeyed as quickly as thought, from one planet and part of the world to another. I found a discussion going on, as to 'a home for babies.' One of the speakers said that sixty thousand unwanted babies were born every year. A great number of them were handed over to negligent and cruel people. After thirty years of missionary work, the speaker actually calmly stated he knew that without a helping hand and supplemental assistance, there was for the mothers of these unfortunate children only the choice of five evils, viz. :—child-, or self-murder, child-desertion, the workhouse, or a life of sin. This is your 'World' to-day, under the management of men,

the world, which is not only too careless to be kind, but which often goes out of its way to be really unkind. 'If the work was to be continued, there was need of immediate very substantial assistance,' said the Hon. Treasurer, at the end of the meeting, adding that the Home was £1500 in debt, and gifts of children's clothing would be most thankfully received, and that many children had to be refused for lack of room and funds. This was inserted the next day in the leading London newspapers, but, to the amazement of the whole spirit world, made no sensation. There was nothing started to raise further funds for this most vital purpose. Is it possible that this is London and the twentieth century, I said to myself. I could not understand the inconsistency of the world, for I read another paper and saw that large sums of money are easily collected for hospitals, when in this age professing for twenty centuries Christianity, we should have learnt to conquer disease as Christ did and meant His disciples to do—not be building to encourage it; for monuments, expensive memorials of all kinds to distinguished persons, for dead and live soldiers, who have proved their skill in savage war; even dogs' and cats' homes have no scarcity of funds, and £700 was lately collected for a deceased poet's bones, to his most infinite amusement. He said by the way, 'My decayed bones, indeed. Can't they let them rest, and feed and house the children.' Huge churches and cathedrals still are being built for God, vast sums of money collected for this, which, united, would build towns of little houses or mansions to shelter human people in whose midmost self and soul is to be found—God, and there alone the germ of God really lives.

"Ah, in every atom of human life, not to be sought in some far-off, blue-roofed Heaven, sitting on a golden throne beyond the clouds, not in

big buildings, beautiful cathedrals, upon altars; but outside in the very bodies of those around us is God. For we are all fragments of God. Heaven is not a place, but a condition of our souls. To find it, search always within.

"What does such a 'World' deserve, while writers are allowed to deplore the decreasing birth-rate, and yet it calmly acknowledges in its newspapers that its unfortunate women have the choice only of such evils as: child-murder, the workhouse, desertion, or a life of sin? What does it deserve, while it allows a nineteen-year-old little flower-girl, who leaves her children at a workhouse door, the best place in the world, until she can provide a home for them, to be called a 'prisoner?' See a newspaper cutting in the Countess's pocket, called abandoning children, and refer to the Lambeth Police Court, 1901. Ah! learn Life's morality, not that of creeds and sects, altars, buildings, churches and men.

"I travelled on. I found a great writer, an excellent man, who is looked upon by some as a saint, writing about women. He said, 'They are allowed too much liberty, and are incapable of unselfishness'—he, who was brought into the world by her pains, and sees her unselfishness, martyrdom, if he would only open his eyes, in every square inch. I then floated about Westminster and passed the Houses of Parliament. There I found the fag end of a discussion on the inabilities of women causing general laughter. I was amazed, and said I had gone back to a bygone age. This is not London and the twentieth century. I found later the cause was rapid degeneration, instead of progression. If all could only realise that conscious unison with the entire scheme of existence which is also identical with perfect freedom!"

The beautiful voice that rang out the words, pregnant with action, ceased.

There was a long pause. A sound like a peal of bells was heard in the room.

"Scientifically explained," said Lucius, the sceptic. "Perhaps a vibration of the somniferous ether."

"Now, good-night," said the spirit voice. "You poor portions of humanity struggling still amid the turmoil of physical life. I'm due to keep an appointment in another planet. Next *séance* I will tell you who I am, or the name I was known by when last in the flesh. I have talked too much now for your untutored earth-crawling imaginations."

Then a new voice sang these words,—

"The spirit world around this world of sense
Floats like an atmosphere, and everywhere
Wafts through these earthly mists and vapours dense,
A vital breath of more ethereal air."

Doris awoke, her own personality was awake again. She sat up, rubbing her eyelids.

"Oh, I am so cold. I've been dreaming of a nice dark man with a long beard and the kindest eyes imaginable. I was quite in love with him. But it seemed, somehow, to be a sort of fourteenth-century Florentine romantic love, and this is the unromantic twentieth century, isn't it? Dear me, I seem to have gone back in some way into the past, remembering some other life."

"Countess, I will come to your next *séance* if you will ask me," said Lady Selbrook.

"Spiritualism indeed possesses a charm for the modern mind," said Lucius Macnamary.

CHAPTER X

MOONLIGHT

"It is the mystery of the unknown
That fascinates us ; we are children still
Wayward and wistful ; with one hand we cling
To the familiar things we call our own,
And with the other, resolute of will
Grope in the dark, for what the day will bring."

"I INTEND to go away," said Valerie, the next evening. "Oh, I do not know—where. At any rate, far from all frivolity to—reality. Somewhere where the twentieth-century fever is kept—at bay."

"That you will find everywhere now," said Lady Ambrose.

"Well, from money-loving, pleasure-seeking, inchoate Society."

"Valerie, are you going to be serious? I'm sorry. Your ridiculous frivolity was your chief charm. Six months of stern realities and you will look like your own grandmother or Papa, when he is trying to teach me philosophy, beginning by expounding that Life is all—froth."

"We are sorry for our hasty resolution," said Valerie. "We have decided we have not sufficient knowledge to solve the marriage problem. We will give ourselves another year before again considering that question from a personal point of view. I intend to make the most of that period, and gain as much further experience as I can. I hope you will forgive our recent complete, absurd and ludicrous fiasco."

Lucius, smiling, joined the group.

"Yes. I intend to see all the dreadful darkness of the modern world. To unite with starving crowds for one year, to try and stifle the voice in me which gives utterance to cries of self, to study human character, motives, nature, ways and means, and to try to realise the great truth of the kindred relationship of all life. I intend to be free mentally and spiritually, without creeds and dead forms to shackle me, free to do *right*, to think *right*, to live *right*, and be my own prophet, priest and king, and seek the truth, and to believe that a sacred spirit dwells in each of us, the observer and guardian of our evil and our good."

"It should take ten lifetimes," drolled Louis Volvois. "To do all you say, Mrs Trelawney, in one year, will be about as easy as—eating custard with a fork!"

"I am ready to acknowledge that my life is more noted for adventuresome than discreet qualities, but all you suggest has as disturbing an effect as a peashot from a shooter," said Doris. "Of course old torments may be described now, in a new way. The phase is acute, but will pass off. They are both tolerably young. An Italian *savant* assured me that Francesca must have been, at least, forty-five, when the supposed infidelity occurred. But this is a digression allowable to one of my profession. Valerie, dear, you remind me of Signora Duse, transfixed with the young gentleman who acted the rôle of Paolo. In your eyes I see a terrible tragic intensity upon a level with some of Dante's *Inferno*. They are open to the same criticism — er — and your tragedy, — as 'Sainte-Beuve' applies to *Paradise Lost*."

"You know I am serious, Lucius?" said Valerie, turning to him for sympathy.

"Oh, Mrs Trelawney, do not turn from me. I have grown so used to Doris that I can never, at

first, take anyone seriously. Believe me, I sympathise with you heartily."

"How *can* you be so rude, Louis? Now, to punish you, I will suggest that you also go away and see life in every phase for a year, too. Only I know from my hundred-and-one experiences with Papa, what 'seeing life,' means for a man. For Papa—whisper it—it means dangerous, golden-haired impossibilities, and I'm too fond of you, now we're engaged, to do other than guard you jealously, dear. However, there is another resource. Can you not run out to a war and get in the way of a bullet?"

"You cannot love me to wish me to become as suicidal a person as the ordinary British investor."

"Well, as you say, a year would be nothing to you. I will reserve you for a longer term. For the far-off days when common-sense will be more common."

"That is only a compliment! You wish to reserve me for a more congenial atmosphere than that of the present century."

"Here is the host telling us all to go to the hall. Andrea Malley has been preparing something to amuse us. It is new and will be sensational if he has had anything to do with it," said the Countess.

"Well, Valerie, at present we are all puppets, puppets of Society, making our giddy rounds of its vicious circle," said Lucius. When the ice was broken, he was always found to be a staunch friend, 'difficile à acquérir mais plus difficile à perdre.'

A few moments afterwards the whole house-party sat looking on with admiration at the scene Andrea Malley had prepared. In the centre of the hall he and a new lovely woman, apparently an Egyptian, whom he had hired from Bond Street, waltzed with strangely weird movements, wholly fascinating the guests. She was a lady who had been in her girlhood clothed chiefly in limelight, but was now more

decorously clothed, and lately advertised herself largely in the papers as "Moonlight: the Spirituelle Clairvoyante and Marvellous Fortune-Teller." Her price was extravagant as she had become the fashion, but Andrea undeterred, with the best intentions, had conceived the notion that she would create a sensation here and add to the amusement of Lady Ambrose's guests.

They were prepared to be amused here—for that purpose, but had not expected he would take part also in the entertainment; that it would be necessary to act his part, for him to waltz about in the centre of the hall, with this exquisitely-robed lady held to him in quite a lover-like grip, while he gazed down, before them all, into her eyes with an undisguised, passionate expression.

Nothing in the dancing world could equal the movements of those two. The swaying grace of their well-matched forms gliding to subtle, weird music, in as perfectly harmonious a measure as could be, was languorously, æsthetically beautiful. She was robed in an entrancing Egyptian costume of flame-coloured chiffon, embroidered in black and gold. Round the hem of her floating skirts, in black velvet, were the signs of the Zodiac. On her head was a huge black hat on which were glittering stars in gold and paste jewels. Her dress was cut too low, but from neck to waist was twisted a live snake, with its sting cut out, attracting attention from her bare arms and too much exposed shoulders, neck and bosom. For about a quarter of an hour she kept her companion waltzing in what she described as a magic circle, her scarlet skirts gleaming in the light like flames of fire enhanced by the flashing jewels.

Mr Trelawney stood up and approached nearer, fascinated as a snake becomes towards its charmer.

"What a lovely creature!" he ejaculated. Then

she caught his eye and smiled with an alluring, wicked expression, causing the entranced look on his face to deepen. "Who is she?" he asked again.

Lady Ambrose looked serious.

"Oh, she is only a professional entertainer," she responded.

"There is something weird about those eyes," said he, his interest unabated. Then he decided to ask her for a dance, too, approaching with that intention.

"Sir, do not approach nearer," said the woman, stopping her dance and breaking away from her partner's embrace. "To come unprepared within my magic circle might have disastrous results for you. If you value your welfare, retire."

It was very effective, as she waved him back, and they all laughed.

Then the "witch" waved Andrea Malley also aside and sat in the middle of her circle on a low chair. She opened the basket and took from it three more sleepy snakes, placing them on the floor. Then she took a curious instrument and began blowing into it, making a weird noise, until they one by one rose, their sleepy heads responding to her sounds and gipsy singing.

"You may come one by one and have your fortunes told," she said to the guests, laying aside her instrument, whistling a lullaby to her companions, the snakes.

"Her restlessness suggests 'Nuri' or 'Indian-Persian' gipsy origin," said Sir Edward Ambrose.

"Are you all afraid? Will you not come?"

No one moved.

"Ah, you may come now," she said to Mr Trelawney.

"People have been telling me, madam," said he, laughing, "that you are a witch and can tell my fortune. Is it true?"

"Thanks! I have never been called that before. That is old-fashioned. We now belong to an important profession. My knowledge is derived through understanding the laws of the moral and spiritual world, as others study the laws of Nature. But you have paid me a compliment, because the English word *witch* responds to the Anglo-Saxon *wicca*, from the root implying 'wisdom.' Few people are aware of this, as they sneer at the poor gipsy women on the moors. Mediæval English *wicche*—*wilga*, mean 'wit and wisdom.'"

"Well, tell me my fortune, lovely lady," pleaded Mr Trelawney.

"Ah! That is not for all to hear," she said, motioning him to a seat by her side. She then told him his fortune.

"Really," said Doris. "I thought it was to be a public performance, and we were to hear. May I have mine next?" she asked, when Mr Trelawney returned.

The lady in scarlet rose and began to sing sweetly lines from a book of 'fairy-lore';—

"Cigno trúsúpal handako
 Hin ada úsalinko
 The zia me prou pro usalin
 Ajtm mange lasair nakin
 Sar e praytin kad chasarel
 Save sile barval marel
 Pal basavo léprasape
 Mre eajori nojd ka mal."

("Ah! Ah! Ah! I've seen you where you never were,
 And where you never will be,
 And yet within that very place you can be seen by me,
 Ah! Ah! Ah! For to tell what they do not know is the art
 of the Romany!")

As the evening progressed, she told each their fortunes in turn, but turning to Doris, she attempted
 er away. "You are too excitable. You

take no rest of mind. Attempt to control your thoughts for at least half an hour a day to prevent a breakdown. Learn the necessity of mental rest, the cessation of thoughts."

"Dear me," complained disappointed Doris, "had I been a mere infant newly born, I could not have been treated in a more childish fashion." The gipsy had almost succeeded in making all the men in love with her. Women are supposed to be inspirations, and she certainly inspired a mystic, hazy fascination. Her dress was a poem with its complex turns and suggestions.

"I wanted you to tell me my future and things of wisdom impenetrable. But here is—Lucius. How slow, not to try and hear your fate. Go immediately," added the girl.

"Will you not come, sir?" said Moonlight.

Lucius hesitated, for he now considered everything connected with the invisible far too sacred to be made the subject of entertainment.

"Madam, I have no wish to learn my destiny from you," he said with a smile, "I consider my fate in higher hands than yours. But how can I resist you? I must obey a lady so charming. Tell me anything you like, the first nonsense that comes into your head, if it will provide amusement for my friends. Let them all hear, and make it as amusing as possible. You see, I have a horror of such sacred matters being treated at all, but because this is your profession, it is our duty to put aside objections. The world is a terribly unfair one to women; there are so few ways open, few professions, by which she can support herself."

"You are right," she said, "whatever women do should have the world's sympathy and patronage." Then "Moonlight" gave him the seat within her magic circle, took her snake from her breast, twisting it on her arm, leaned back in her own chair with her

eyes closed and the finger tips of one hand touching his arm, and said,—

"All men display their stage of spiritual elevation in their mental calibre, by their daily life, and—conduct," she murmured, then was silent as if sleeping again. "Ah! for you the rose and the thorn, love and jealousy—green-eyed, bitter jealousy. In the air all around, in the atmosphere, I see it. Thoughts of green and black and the lurid red of anger."

Again she was silent.

"Ah! but for you the healing of life's wounds, Ah! 'Cigno trúsúpal handako, Hinada úsalinako.' Ah! Ah! Love uplifts. It breaks the icy heart of selfishness, the stiff neck of pride. But remember, it adores not the individual, but the 'ideal' he represents, and that is the way to higher things. Become that, for all ideals are good. That is how man begins to go to God. To be fortified by the positive strength of a beautiful ideal, is to be armed against a wrong desire, by shame of being unworthy in its presence. By the longing to resemble that which he adores, the 'ideal,' man sets his mind towards noble thinking, and wrong desire becomes more and more incongruous."

Again was she silent.

"Love can see no sin. Ah! Ah! What is this? This love seeks not *you*. No, no,—but the 'ideal' it thinks you may rise to. She loves not *you*, but an ideal which you are at present quite unlike, and ah! the ideal she loves is—what? How to describe it? A mental concept of a most inspiring character. If you were that, you would rise still higher—higher. Oh, so high. Look—the sun shines! the gladness of the first pink glory of the rising sun. Now, the sky is as blue as a violet bud. Listen! the birds sing. Listen, to the tide's ebb and flow, but before that—oh, —words, so many words, harsh words, which jar upon the soul's current."

Then she was again silent.

("In a valley, with a pool of water blinking like a blue eye up to heaven, far removed from the haunts of men, I see a figure, a man, only just beginning to learn the law. He is railing against that which he thinks a sea of injustice. Man-like, he has followed every object that attracted him, and he yearns to grasp every object he thinks desirable to him, which is the Way of Knowledge, for he is learning by Experience, sweet and bitter. See! he is wringing his hands in his pain. But he is learning, and he will soon catch a glimpse of the 'deific' plan. Man makes plans but they are shattered unless in harmony with that. Ah! but now all is black. I am now in a little city where beggars play exquisitely on their guitars. I see another figure—a lady. Now, there are haughty Venetians serving 'granita' and iced coffee. Now, all is dim again. Now, flower-girls. The scent of the anisette, stephanotis, and rose. Two people—Ah!—We cannot become perfect without finding our other part, without which our spirits are incomplete."

"Many thanks, it is charming! Undoubtedly erroneous," said Lucius, interrupting her abruptly and firmly.

He bowed and left his chair vacant for the Dean.

"An old man has no fortune to learn," said that good man.

"Old age is a disease to be conquered. Now, sir, touch my hand. Ah! I see a figure. A man, a compound of modernity and sentimentality, that perverted form of emotionalism. He had one true love affair, with a woman like one of the stately women of Michel Angelo; it is past, his soul is being stifled through his love for fashionable soul-sick people, who measure others for their position in the world. He has incongruous characteristics and a tendency to cultivate for his friends women con-

spicuous for weak intellects and large fortunes. Oh! sir, turn in every direction for the search of truth. In all religions strive not to externalise but to internalise yourself. The world in its newest thought begins to see the connection with even the mythological religions of a bygone age. Don't preach creeds that offend against Nature's laws."

Then Moonlight whispered the rest of the vision she saw, and concluded the evening's entertainment, standing facing them all, waving her hands, saying,—

"Ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! I am 'Moonlight,' and I see invisible things by their analogy to the visible. Adieu! adieu! It is the Art of the Romany, adieu! adieu! adieu!"

"Oh renounce all earthly and vain ambitions, the pathless wastes and storms of the sea of commercial life, and begin a new and bright career of research into the realms of life and spiritual existence. The refined intellectual man who has not found God is indeed a wanderer in the midst of fogs which skirt a shoreless sea—his soul trembles on the verge of the unknown. Old age finds him weary and sick of life, his soul not illuminated by the spirit. Live as men and women, no longer to remain slaves to things supposed to be necessities, but by the assistance of spirit move up to Heaven's original intentions, the love and wisdom principles of your beings. For as you now are, the true and heavenly side is quite opposite to your human and material side, and is conflicting."

CHAPTER XI

SUSPICION IS VERY OFTEN A USELESS PAIN

IT was twelve o'clock the evening following the *séance*. Andrea Malley seemed to be making curious preparations in a room in his house. There was a soft light coming from a red-globed lamp on the mantelpiece. A small fire burned in the grate; its occasional blaze added to the dim illumination of the room. The owner had thrown on a loose dressing-gown of rough material, russet-brown in colour, tied loosely around his waist by a cord. The room was the one previously described by Doris as being papered with photographs and miniatures.

He sat in an armchair by the fireplace and drew a table near enough to lean his elbows upon.

"Thought is everything! Everything!" he murmured. "It is the spiritual part of us; but I prefer that she should be asleep. I am not quite sure yet if she sleeps."

He looked at his watch. There was an impatient expression on his face.

"I expect so! I know she went to her room two hours ago—at my suggestion, of course, although she little suspects this—and pleaded a headache."

He sat for a few moments listening to the ticking of the clock. He knew that what he was about to do was extremely contemptible.

"Ah! I am thankful that many others have not yet discovered what mediæval magic really was, or there would be more experimenters. I seek to gauge the Infinite, to unveil the fathomless Unknowable.

As it is, I have few rivals. But I know that it is a truth. Most astounding discoveries will be made in the near future. From this my present study the first communication will be arrived at with the other planets; then will follow the most marvellous delights and wonders not yet imagined by man. Even mental communication by two people at a distance is only at present beginning to be thought over and discussed as possible. The people of this age are slow. I have been aware of it for many years. When this faculty has reached its perfection, there will be no need of telephones or telegraph, or any such troublesome and expensive mechanical contrivances of an unenlightened age. How they will be laughed at, as rude implements! But I mean to go farther than this even, and at once. It will be a grand experiment. I shall waste no time. It is my ambition now by my will to send my medium's sub-conscious self—her inner spirit—to one of the planets, when she sleeps. I, Andrea Malley, to-night, will be the first to discover other worlds. The moon shall be my chosen place for her destination."

Like a man in a dream, he remained silent, and leaned his head upon his elbows. He had a slight headache.

"Are you asleep?" he asked inwardly after a moment with great concentration of what he described as his inner sub-conscious personality—a personality which he declared had become quite obedient to him through training. He waited for ten minutes in perfect silence. At last a distinct impression came to him of a voice answering "Yes" which travelled to his ordinary every-day personality, until the "yes" was repeated to him eventually like the sound of a real living voice.

"Well, I want you," he said hastily, accompanying his desire by mechanical suggestion in the way of every emphatic movement of his arm, by his tone

of voice and emphasis,—in the same way, only with greater force, as an orator, losing himself in his enthusiasm, accompanies all his mental suggestions with quick gesticulations, and succeeds in impressing, and often really magnetising his audience.

He waited another ten minutes. At last his patience was rewarded. Slowly from under the crack of the door a thin white mist, like smoke, seemed to arise. It expanded inside the room, and gradually it began to take form.

The man remained in the same position, with his elbows on the table, his head upon his hand, and watched it develop. At last the form was distinguishable—most distinctly it was Doris O'Carroll.

It was Doris herself—that inner, but the real Doris, while the insignificant part of her, known to the world as Doris O'Carroll—that mere flesh and blood personality—lay on her bed in Lady Ambrose's pretty guest bedroom, sleeping in a trance.

But this real Doris was not the laughing, giddy being she invariably personated for the amusement of her friends. The real Doris was quiet, serious, cold and unhappy-looking, and gave one the impression of a human being only half-developed.

She did not speak, but the thought in her mind instantly conveyed itself to his inner self. Speech—clumsy, imperfect language—was unnecessary.

"Yes, I have need of you! I am experimenting for the good of mankind," he thought back to her. "Go and fetch Lady Ambrose's valuable ruby heirloom. I need not tell you where it is. You carry an impression of the cabinets possibly in your mind's eye, that will lead you to it. Thought forms, real selves, have no need of keys, and locks do not hinder."

"Ah! at last!"

Andrea Malley heard a sound on the table, then the glittering blood-red jewels were thrown upon it with a crash. He looked up once more, and saw the form of Doris. This was his first experiment; it had succeeded, and he became buoyant with hope. It had given him a new spasm of activity; so much so, that he forgot the concentration of his mind upon the mental picture he had formed in it of the sleeping girl, and rose to his feet, forgetting everything but the possibilities in store for him—the future that his discovery promised.

"Diplomacy! who dares talk now of diplomacy! The secrets of the world are mine—the secrets of country, state, strategy, war, and, who knows? perhaps of other worlds. Balloons, flying-machines—pooh! childish toys. The only way to communicate with other worlds is not by such absurd inventions as these, but through the spirit, by the shedding of our material earthy personalities. Evolving, evolving, until we grow more and more and more spiritual, until at last the memory of our present fleshy animal state becomes absolutely repugnant to us, then we shall be able to traverse naturally and easily to other worlds. To desire to be there, to mentally picture one's self in that spot, will be all that is necessary as a means of conveyance. Thought, thought, thought! it is the grand power—thought!"

He sat down again in the same attitude, saying,—
"And—Now for my experiment. Doris! Doris! the spirit of you—that spirit that has lived through other ages, and has been born innumerable times, and after death in various centuries has struggled to come to earth and be born again, and succeeded—I command you go through the air to the regions of the moon; return, and convey to my thoughts what you behold there."

In this life we reap the harvest sown in some

previous existence. In the present rudimentary state of our knowledge it is difficult to conceive the particular form in which the prevision of the deeper self translates itself in "hallucination," or dream, insanity, or madness.

"Ned! I have a curious fancy to look for my rubies," said the hostess two evenings later.

Hearing this, Sir Edward Ambrose came out of the room through the folding doors into that of his wife's. She was seated before her mirror, in a delicate blue chiffon robe, her maid brushing her hair.

"Why, dear?"

Lady Ambrose did not answer for a moment. Her husband walked toward the table, and examined the contents of a large silver tray.

"You are never careless with your keys. You carry the key of your jewel-case on your person, do you not?"

"It is here?"

"Yes."

Sir Edward looked at his wife again. Then sat down abruptly.

"Have a 'pick-me-up,' Mary. I think you require it. The Countess's new-fangled sort of spirits from other planets do not seem to suit your temperament. I came to you for a nice little gossip, Mary. Can you send Hunter away? I have this affair, this 'Macnamary-Trelawney' business on my brain. It is a pity they met perhaps, and here. I am not at all sure we are right in countenancing it. You see, when a man has a wife and several step-children, and a woman a husband with an enormous income, I for one think it too late to have all these new 'cross-Atlantic' ideas. Putting away the past, and beginning again, is a very good motto, of course, always. But I am still somewhat afraid that 'married people'

have no right to fall in love, except with—their own husband or wife, as we do over and over again with each other. I'm afraid, Mary, everything else spells chaos. No! Mary, I am old-fashioned, and think it must be—”

“Oh, Ned, I cannot tell you why, but I must search for my rubies. As Hunter brushed my hair, I lay back and closed my eyes and think I must have dozed, for I distinctly seemed to see a white figure pass through the room, with masses of red stones in its hands. Then I felt as cold as ice. Then—then I called you, and you came.”

“Mary, have a little ‘brandy and soda.’ I insist!”

But Lady Ambrose went to her room adjoining, and turned on the light. Her husband followed. Hastily she unlocked a cabinet, then—at last took from it her peculiar little jewelled cabinet. She let it fall on the floor.

“Ned, Ned, Ned! it is true—they are gone!”

“Gone! What madness is this?” asked Sir Edward.

“It is true.”

“Impossible—it is madness! I say.”

“Well, where are my pet jewels—my rubies?”

“But the key, Mary, you have the key in your possession always. Oh, we are all crazy. It was—it must be the Countess and her ‘confounded spirits.’”

But he stopped, a look of intense fright passed over his countenance. He turned bluey-white. They both sat down and gazed at each other.

Sir Edward got up and shook himself together.

“No, I'm not quite such a fool, but I thought I too saw a white figure. No!—I'll telephone for the cleverest detective I can get. Ah, we will soon see. Do not speak of it. Do not let Hunter suspect there is anything wrong.”

“Oh, Ned, I have a hideous thought that troubles

"Tell me!" he said.

"Well, Ned, do you remember the old story of the jewels. Do you think my godmother really meant Valerie to have them after all, and that this is a sign of her repentance or wrath against me, for not giving them to her, that they are now lost. But I—somehow I couldn't part with them, and always put the thought from me."

"No! no! my dear. Your nerves—nerves I say."

He was silent. Five minutes passed.

"No, Mary," said Sir Edward. "I don't believe in ghosts, and I don't think ghosts require—jewels."

But at that moment, suddenly, as if out of space, the jewels fell with a crash upon the table at his elbow.

One of the most cruel evils and greatest wrongs of modern mediumship is the constrained enforcement of phenomena. Once started, and mischievous, perhaps even wicked spirits are attracted in this way to us, it is difficult to send them away again. There have been many disastrous results of *stances* by unprepared people, and most weird, curious, unaccountable happenings, which no one can deny, in everyone's experience, in which we see we are powerless to help. We then recognise that they come from the unseen which at present we do not understand. Our ignorance of the invisible forces and the cause of such "happenings" is—piteous.

CHAPTER XII

THE RESULT OF THE EXPERIMENT

"Illa est agricolæ messis iniqua suo."—OVID.

It was past midnight, the house was quiet, but for an occasional murmur from the usual assembly of gamblers in the card-room, playing over the green cloth until early hours. Everyone else, down to Lady Vi's Pom, appeared to be sleeping the sleep of the just.

Suddenly a piercing, unearthly shriek broke the silence. It was followed by mingled noises from various rooms caused by the opening and slamming of doors, windows, and people springing out of bed. Then another shriek sounded through the house, coming to all as a not-to-be-forgotten horror.

Louis Volvois had been burning midnight oil. He flung aside his papers, note-books, nearly overturned his writing-table in haste to discover from whence came the hideous sounds. Shriek after shriek broke the silence. Usually so calm, serious, his bent figure stooping over his books, now he stood to his full height looking totally altered. The spirit of energy seemed to take possession of him. At that moment this stooping scholar looked like a soldier eager for battle, a determined man full of strength and power. Past half-open doors, through long corridors, that unfathomable power which men little value—intuition—guiding him, he reached at last Doris O'Carroll's room.

"What horror is this? My sweetheart
harms you?" he cried, his very soul

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speaking through his voice. A tall regal woman shrouded with white draperies, a corsetless figure, hurried along the same corridor. It was the Countess Eulalia.

"This is some special message sent to me from 'spirit-land'" she said. Her speed had its limitations, for every two seconds she lost one or the other of her bedroom slippers, and even the supposed call of the spirits could not reconcile her to arriving with bare feet on the scene of mystery, evidently being enacted somewhere in a bedroom, at the farthest end of the corridor.

"This is a clear case of 'demoniac possession' such as we read of in the Bible. Do we not read that the spirits of evil possessed the body of a girl, were cast into swine and drowned in the sea? Thank Heaven that Science is at last recognising the truth of even those facts which it used to laugh at as foolish legends. They are now being proved by 'Spiritualism' every day. It is a Godsend I am here. How thankful I am that I live in this wonderful century, just awakening to the possibilities of, and almost one step across the border of hitherto unknown worlds! Perhaps I am destined to be that stepping-stone, a faith-healer, a woman full of belief, able soon to develop, with the help of the spirits, faculties to perform miracles, as the old Scriptural people did ages ago, and which were, later, monopolised by priests."

The dear Countess turned again to catch up with her toe the erring, heelless slipper she had left behind again in the corridor.

The whole house was in confusion, guests arriving in the corridor leading to Doris's room from most unexpected directions, but the unexpected is really what always is to be expected at fashionable house-parties, and at any other time the half-dressed figures, appearing from quarters far away from their

own, might have caused—complications. In fact, the good host and hostess seemed to be the only couple of the party whose arrival was timed together, but this was easily accounted for, owing to their recent discussion over the loss of the jewels. Valerie Trelawney was the second anxious inquirer to reach Doris's room. A dazed-looking person she appeared to be with her beautiful, long, auburn red hair streaming over her shoulders and her figure wrapped in trailing white garments. The piteous sight that met her vision stunned her, as she stood half-way inside the room. Doris was sitting up in her bed, her eyes, bloodshot, were rolling first one side and then the other. She was still shrieking, and at intervals between each shriek, as she gasped for breath, foam started from her mouth, and blood oozed from her nose. Kneeling on the floor, clutching her hands as if to hold them down and prevent her using them to her own injury—was Louis Volvois. After gazing spell-bound for a brief interval Valerie Trelawney turned, coming face to face with Sir Edward and Lady Ambrose. She commanded, "A doctor—a doctor! Send for a brain specialist at once."

Through the doorway now came the Countess. Hearing this, and glancing at Doris and at Valerie she ejaculated, "No! no—Wait, my friends!"

She stood to her full height, almost as if she were acting a part on the stage, with the air of a tragic actress it became her so well to assume, the oratorical side of her temperament now to the fore. With tremendous force in her voice she continued, waving her hands to repel remonstrance: "It is I. Be not afraid!"

The "Modern Spiritualist," Christian Scientist, Woman's Leader, Divine Scientist—everything good and progressive one liked to call her, could not now have said more, had she been "Christ Himself."

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And her beauty and confidence did not fail, as indeed it is rarely known to do, in producing confidence in the minds of her hearers. It seemed curious, too, that Doris from that moment ceased shrieking, and the good Countess was the cynosure of every eye as she approached the bedside.

"Doris, my child, calm yourself," she ordered. "Tell me the cause of your terror, which is verging on—madness. Believe me, daughter, as Jairus's girl was raised of old, there is nothing, depending upon my faith in God's Divinity within me, that I cannot relieve."

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" shrieked Doris. "How can I describe it? It was a silver white glare that caused such excruciating pain in the head. Pain that I feel here in my brain. Oh, it was a horrible dream! No, no, I know it was real by the pain that is killing me."

She leant back upon the pillow exhausted. After a second she started up, and was moved by a determination to speak at all costs.

"Louis, I want to tell you I love you as much as you do me, yet I have been enamoured by that dark experimenting fiend you all know as Andrea Malley. He has influenced me as a snake influences its prey. I lay upon this very bed and felt an uncomfortable desire to sleep. I slept, but my dreams were all of that man and that woman, that evil spirit he calls 'Moonlight.' His eyes glared at me like those of a snake's, and in spite of all resistance I found myself getting nearer to him. Do not doubt what I tell you, or think me mad. He had influenced my internal spirit out of my ordinary body as I lay here sleeping to go to him, his object being to use me as an instrument for his experiments. He is an astronomer, and as he uses his telescope to bring the celestial bodies in the skies to our vision, so he had conceived a mad notion to use my spirit, my astral body, to reach them instead, endeavouring to push 'clair-

voyant' research far beyond the limits of this world, this one planet. Always remember, I have been sacrificed, made an instrument to enlarge the horizon of human understanding. This is no wild dream of a visionary, but an actual fact; my whole being has been dissected, he has put all this from theory into practice. Yes, I have been used as cruelly as any vivisected animal to extend the work of this modern astronomer, disguised as a harmless guest of a house-party. He said that his knowledge before was only of the external, of distances and instrumental measurements."

Naturally they all thought she was insane, and Valerie defied the Countess, insisting that a doctor should be sent for at once. All except Louis; he listened attentively. Doris then lurched forward as if to spring out of bed and dragged her hands from his.

"Oh, the pain!" she shrieked. "If I could only stop it to tell you everything." Her eyes flashed with determination and there was something of the old Doris to be seen. "But I will. You shall hear before too late! Ah, that is better. Now draw near. I must be quick before the pain comes to block the current of my thoughts. I must have been subconscious in that state some time. How it happened I cannot tell, or what he did exactly. But I became conscious that I was floating about, and over me as it were was a great globe of silver light. Oh! a mass of glorious light, that shone and sparkled around me. It seemed I had here received a shock and could approach no further. And the cold—it was as if I were in a block of ice! Now I know, as I remember the peculiar coldness, the beautiful, maddening, silver light, that no one, not even a spirit, could exist a pace further. It was all volcanic basalt and without life. Next, I became conscious like a moth I had approached too near and the

light was killing me. It was the moon. The wretch had sent me to the moon! It—sometimes when its rays are stronger than usual—affects human beings even on earth, and at an immense distance creates lunatics. Yet I had been sent to it. Of course I realised then that I was ‘in the spirit’ which had left my material body on the bed. I had been travelling at his instigation, and sacrificed to a mistaken experiment, to add to that Stupendous Science—the possible communication with all other worlds around us. Imagine my agony of mind, when I realised that Nature would not exterminate me and end my suffering by letting me die like all other natural people who had not been psychologically tampered with. I knew that I could not finally cease to live, as I now wished to do, without first returning here to my material self or body, lying sleeping in this room. Had it only ceased to breathe for a moment—my body—there would have been some hope for me, and I need not have returned to die. But no. My body was unfortunately still alive, sleeping happily to all appearances in the physical world. It is against natural laws for a body to remain in that state on earth, still alive and sleeping when the spirit has departed to another world, because it would have to go on and on, sleeping for ever. So to die, I had to come to it again, suffering all the ill effects of that flight to the moon, and bear the penalty of Nature’s laws being tampered with. I knew that the instant my ‘inner self’ returned to my body the effect produced by the moon’s rays, when extended to my weaker outer personality and physical brain—for no brain can repel the fatal influence of the moon—that it would cause violent frantic madness, until the spirit could be released again by Death—the death of my material body. Knowing this, I cried out and prayed to the dominant, unseen forces to change this law for once—‘one moment’s contrary direction

surely couldn't matter,' I said, 'or affect any other part of Nature's scheme.' I was so insignificant. Might I not be allowed to die completely, my two or three bodies at once? I longed to be able to tell you, Louis, to go and kill my physical body and thus enable me to depart without returning to it. But I had not the will, because that fiend had influenced me to his power. He was waiting my return, so I decided on my plan of action. When I returned, as he was now wishing me to do, I would butt my spirit against his, and avenge myself. And I did—"

Doris fell back. A doctor had arrived, and poured some liquid between her lips.

"And I fought him—'in my spirit.' You will find him in his room. I conquered— In my more subtle body I had gone distances running to billions of miles away, much quicker than light, which takes three and a half years to come from the nearest fixed star. He wished me to go also to the nearest fixed star, the brightest I mean, 'Sirius,' whose light takes two years to reach us, but instead I had gone to the 'Moon.' I learnt a great deal in that moment of the relations of planets, unsuspected by modern astronomers, but his object was frustrated, and I did not inform him on my return, but, instead, avenged myself. So true it is that the stars have influence, that this first experiment has been the cause of my death, which must happen, I know, within a very short time of my return from that all-pervading ether space. Oh, could you know the inexplicable relationships of planetary aspects, conjunctions with human affairs! Experience—my experience floors incredulity!"

Doris put her hand to her head.

"Oh! that pain!" she shrieked, "that tantalising silver light again upon me, to drive me mad and kill me!"

She fell back. The doctor bent over her.

"She is dead," he said.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FRUITION OF LADY VIOLET'S SCHEME

"Man's body and mind are exactly like a jerkin, and a jerkin's lining ; rumple the one and you rumple the other."

—STERNE.

THE good Dean was dozing. He was clothed in a *négligé* night toilette of pale blue silk, having now departed from his sober, prosaic paths. Blue silk lends a soft impression to the most rugged masculine nature. He had cast off artificiality, surrendering himself to natural grace and abandonment.

After attempting a speculative article upon the condition of insane people after death, he had written himself out, and the last words of his essay were these : " I am afraid the immorality of the age is owing to the great decadence of classic study."

Too tired to get into bed, he had thrown himself upon the sofa, and was dreaming bad dreams, disturbed by violent shrieking.

Suddenly he awakened.

"Am I dreaming? This is indeed a *vulgar* 'trivial' moment," he ejaculated.

Two arms were thrown around his neck and his head was dragged upon a full and womanly breast.

"Have I taken leave of my senses?" he asked, only half awake, struggling from an octopus-like embrace.

"Is it possible there is a woman here?" he asked. "This fact, combined with the awkward, uncomfortable imprisonment of my head, places me in an exceedingly painful position."

He was genuinely perturbed, and could not have been more startled had he been awakened by dynamite.

"Robert, dear Robert, I heard shrieks—terrible shrieks, and I felt—knew, that they were yours. I felt you were in pain. What is it? I came to—"

"Lady Violet Dene—*You* here.—Impossible! In my room. This is indeed—"

With a last desperate wrench he succeeded in freeing his head and leaned back upon the sofa cushions.

"Dearest Robert! it is a little rash, but I was dreaming, too—and of you," said the woman who stood now before him. "Yes, it is curious, but I'll own it," she admitted, with a coquettish glance up at him. "And suddenly, I was awakened by your heartrending shriek. Without thought of self or of my good name, I rushed to you. Hearing that last shriek, I felt you must be in a paroxysm of pain. Yet a great philosopher says, 'Woman is incapable of self-sacrifice.' I am the exception, Robert, see what I have braved to come to you."

The Rev. Robert stared at Lady Vi.

She was looking as beautiful in her carefully-arranged artistic undress in the dim light as was possible for Art—dear good Art—to make her. Her hair exquisitely coiffured as usual in front, with a few enticing stray locks hanging down her back, all well arranged, for she had spent one hour before making her appearance there, decorating herself, and the shrieks had come in most miraculously. She had only recently discovered a new complexion cream, advertised not to contain grease and to reduce subcutaneous fat, which, unlike all others, could be used without encouraging a moustache, guaranteed to transform the veriest scrag into a pretty rounded figure, and prevent all bones from getting at all on the surface. She had also removed her new "chin-

strap," also a contrivance for "salt-cellar" above the collar bones, her special "Diable Tonic" for her eye-lashes, her wonderful "bandettes" for effacing lines, "Colliers of Beauté" for restoring the "contour" of her throat, "Tablets of Beauté" for puffy and baggy cheeks, and was now ready for—attack!

The good clergyman was an observant man, and he gazed at her now in an attitude of wicked, cruel cynicism, which should have had the effect of a moist blanket. He had lived among the type of women who treat men, particularly ecclesiastics, as superior beings, fostering all the germs of conceit in their natures, and he had had many an attack upon "his most persistent bachelordom." But this seemed to crown all his past experience for ingenuity and daring.

"Oh, oh! Women! women! why will you not leave me alone? Oh! oh! women! Is human intelligence really unequal to your problems?" he murmured. "I never uttered one sound, not even a snore, Lady Violet," he replied, without a ghost of a smile, "much less a shriek! Do you not think your experiment—er—our midnight interview—shockingly at variance with social conventions?" But here he paused, hesitated, and was consequently lost, for his good nature was always to the fore—"Well, perhaps as you are here, a little discussion for, say, ten minutes, cannot make much difference. Pray, be seated," he added in his clerical voice.

After ten minutes' chat, slowly but surely, he felt he was being hurled from his pedestal, that he was wrong in encouraging her to stay. How many times, he reminded himself, had he expounded the fact, that the weaker nature in everyone will strive for mastery. "My first vague impression that I dreaded her company should have been a distinct proof of this, and yet—"

He now passed her a cushion, and arranged it at the back of her chair.

"I believe you imagine that my version has no degree of credence, Robert," said Lady Vi, reproachfully, seating herself with cheerful alacrity. "I assure you the shriek I imagined to be yours pierced my heart, and could be heard all over the house."

The Dean, in spite of feeling undignified in his sleeping dress, had now assumed a somewhat jocund mien, and lost his aloofness. He felt his behaviour was the height of imprudence.

"But a mere chat with her now will be a very harmless experiment or pastime," he argued to himself, unable to resist her enticing smiles. As regards Lady Vi, she was a resourceful person, and she made up her mind that he should propose to her at all costs.

"I must bring my whole mind to bear upon this case. I shall only require a little breathing time to bring him to his knees. He has evaded me long enough, other watchful eyes and the shackles of propriety have obstructed me, but the time has come. I must delay no longer, for this party is nearly over. 'Man is a savage but always a tameable savage,'" she repeated, to give herself confidence. "Sometimes he can be captured without taming, put into harness, then easily broken in!" Her love affairs were always conducted now on strictly business methods, so after inwardly giving herself the idea of power and confidence, she became quite saucily joyous. Her spirits seemed to pervade the Dean, for he grew as merry as if he had just returned from seeing one of his favourite French plays. Of thought is born will, of will—action; who can describe the subtle power of a woman's mind? The great success that has been attained in mental healing is attracting the attention of thoughtful, unbiassed minds. From this has arisen at the root all women's powers over men.

"This is quite an adventure, and after all we are out of sight of prying eyes. She is really so improved

—er—er—so—er—piquant and daring,” he murmured with a sort of childish chuckle of joy, as he gazed upon Lady Vi’s carefully powdered new complexion and figure. There was a sort of nonchalance about the powder on her nose. She had dropped some of her patent eyelashes and eyebrows upon the sofa cushion by his side, which was rather a waste, because they cost five shillings a box. This distinguished ornament and example was already beginning to look a lovely specimen of perverted manhood, for he was most easily yielding to Lady Vi’s smile, her chief weapon. But in her eyes she did not appear to be rewarded by any appreciable measure of success. So she went a little closer, and gazed into his eyes in a childish manner.

“Dearest Robert, may I call you Bob? Bobs, now, is—er—er—such a sweet pet name. Yes?—well! Bobs dear, did you ever, ever hear, in your life, that an alliance—always implies—an exchange of services?”

“Violet Dene,” replied the Dean, smiling in spite of himself now, in a very sentimental fashion, not too consistent with propriety, “that certainly is a problem of policy.”

His smile gave her a satisfactory impetus to continue.

“Dear Bobs,—well, you are—oh, a dull man. Oh—a dear dull creature. You need not mind falling from your pedestal, for once! You may—you—er—may—kiss me.”

She looked at the floor and the Dean lost his head completely. Putting his arm around her, pressing her to him, he gave her quite loud boisterous kisses, now most inconsistent with all propriety.

“Ah!—Bobs, women, you see, have conquered and men have fallen from their silly pedestals since—well—since Rome ruled the world,” whispered Lady Vi.

Although Bobs was becoming more and more sentimental at every moment, and even went so

far as to whisper "Little lovelet," he was only at present following in the footsteps of mere ordinary deceitful man, for he had no immediate intention of proposing and being conquered in that practical, definite, hurried way. However it was not to be denied, that her manœuvres were becoming anything but repugnant to him, and his own attentions too explicit for even her lax notions.

She now grew calm. It was the calmness of a master-hand and mind which is always so distinct and separate from the excited wavering action of the subordinate. "Bobs" in this case being the subordinate and Lady Vi's "the master mind," and so he who had hitherto gone through life with unruffled equanimity, before another ten minutes were over, was conquered completely, and had not only acknowledged, with amazing docility, that an alliance meant an exchange of services, but had actually arranged one. One of those binding melancholy alliances too, usually celebrated in church, accompanied by orange-blossom wedding-cake, and old shoes. For her determination had reached the culminating point, and she had brought him to her knees. Alas! poor "Bobs!" He who had escaped for fifty-six years was in the end as easily deluded as—for want of a better simile—men of the secret service in tragic plays on the stage.

The next time he preached a sermon he took for his text these words: "It is not good for man to be alone," and from this sermon he formed mental pictures in the minds of his congregation of rural bliss. But for all that on the whole it was a dreary sermon. To listen to it was like attuning one's life to the *fin de siècle* dead march. Yet, in spite of this realistic chapter, there are still people who will probably continue to say that "Marriages are made in Heaven."

CHAPTER XIV

DISPERSAL

"Was menschen säen werden die Götter ernten ; Gott spricht
durch seine Welt, der Mensch durch seine That."

—TIEDGE.

("What men sow, the gods will reap ; God speaks through
His world, man through his deed.")

"THE day has passed at last," murmured Louis Volvois, the following evening.

All night long he sat on the shore, struggling with despair.

The rolling sound of the moving waters now came to his ears, and he felt like them, broken-hearted and storm-wrecked. Great waves fell away into foam when they reached their climax against the dim height of the cliffs, and the noise seemed to him like thunder. He was melancholy, and this voice of the waters, to him in his mental agony seemed like a funeral dirge making fretting mournful music, suiting his mood. The silver moon came lighting the waves, like dashes and spots of dazzling milk-white paint from a painter's brush, and occasionally changing what was left of the night into a mimic day. Louis listened to the swing and rhythm, and looked above him, past the shimmering waves, to the line of the sea, and the undiscovered worlds athwart the star-besprinkled sky. Then at the dark pines behind him, red with autumnal dress, now appearing blue-black by moonlight, at aged trees, full of scared night-birds, and unkempt tangles of weeds and brushwood, close on a line with his eye.

He was thinking of London as he last had seen it,

with the chimneys vomiting volumes of blackness, with rushing trains, that capital representing the world, with its streams of hurrying, panting, cruel men, clutching each other, with fierce hatred burning in their hearts against all who stood in their way ! Of its stunned women, whipped by their life in the world, except the few who appeared to be raised on pedestals, and apparently to outward appearances worshipped—those, the selfish, grasping men of the world had use for, in some way or another, generally to assist them in their own worldly careers, in their selfish ambitions, or to cater to their lower natures. "Everything a mere question now of price," he thought.

This was not the first time in his life that Louis Volvois shrank from the world, as he knew it, and now from his own future, since Doris had gone from him, for he was a man who, although he prided himself he was one of the world's thinkers, had no religion, neither had he yet sufficiently drawn out the inherent Divinity of his own soul to be conscious of any Divine invisible guidance, or of the great unseen forces always at work around him. In this age of immense intellectual awakening and stir, the danger is that the claims of heart will be wholly cast aside.

The forces of thought were rioting within him. He was shattered in mind by the storms of emotion he had undergone the night previously when poor Doris had died. He lay on the damp grass and closed his eyes. In a few moments it seemed to him he was awakened by these words and by a rustling sound,—

"Slave to no sect nor creed,
Take no private road,
But walk with Nature up to Nature's God.
This is the liberty God gave to man,
Yet few there be that find it."

Looking up, he saw a woman, with a grave, beautiful face, dressed in silver-grey garments.

"Is this another result of the Countess's *séance*?" he exclaimed. "Are we all—all—bewitched? or are we still rational beings, living in a rational world."

Without the least appearance of surprise at seeing him there, she nodded, smiling in a friendly manner.

"You appear to be in great trouble!" she said, and the man who listened was aware of an atmosphere of Peace, Strength, Calmness and Rest. "I belong to a 'Band of Helpers,'" she said, smiling sweetly. "Helpers of Humanity! I am a 'Physician of Human Misery!'"

The man felt bewildered by a curious sense of familiarity, as if he had met the guidance he had been inwardly longing for all his life, and that part of his morbid mental misery was being expelled in some miraculous manner, lifted from his mind, as if it were actually some real, subtle, injurious substance.

"You are grieving for a girl you think dead."

"She is dead," returned Louis, emphatically.

"Oh! How sad it is to see the great prominence given still to that change, which is through long habit called 'Death!' How sad to see the prominence given still to physical life at the present day by those whose sight is not yet developed beyond mere physical matter! Doris O'Carroll has passed on, progressed in life a little, and her own evolution, by casting off her material, encumbering body, although not to be disparaged by any means, a most useful vehicle to return to in the service of Humanity and for work upon the coarse, physical, grosser plane. Why it came as it did, why the disappointment you feel by this sudden change should be your lot, I cannot at this moment tell you. It is some Karmic result. But her fate could not be altered. Her limitations and yours are, perhaps, caused by misspent former existences. No one can escape the results of causes they have set in motion themselves. So you must accept them, which you will do gladly, when you

realise the truth of my words, as something worked out, and past, and done with, not to be suffered again, and when you realise the truth of Reincarnation. She has sent me to you. Being as yet unable to materialise herself, she sent me. The dead, so called, are not far away, as you think, but exactly as they were before. You must now go straight on in your path of advancement, not for your own, but for the uplifting of Humanity, and fit yourself for that. It is what you are here for. For, remember, that the girl you love, Doris, is a human being still, close to you, and even more sensitive to your thoughts and feelings than before, when in her heavy physical body. Conquer the lower nature, entirely, as the higher is developed. Join me, help us, never rest until the goal is reached, and unity and love takes the place in the world of hatred and competition. You have begun, and are half-way on your pathway, and your own is the only road. This goal has possibilities beyond your present comprehension. Your longing for one friend whom you think dead, who is merely living in the more sensitive astral body, the vehicle of emotion, must now give place to the earnest desire for the great day to be reached, when all mankind will be One, instead of grief, which only does harm to yourself, and actually hurts Doris as well. Grief for the dead is as ridiculous as belief in "hellfire" and a sulphureous future, and other old theological absurdities. Helpers' services are often needed on both sides for the so-called dead. Some cling passionately to earth, and some worry for the condition of those left behind, and then we have to offer our services occasionally on the physical plane, to carry out their wishes, or send a message when they have been unable to arrange their affairs themselves—perhaps, owing to sudden departure, as in this case. It is difficult for you to grasp the reality of this fact? Yet, in your Churches you are preached

to of angels and many higher and lower stages of beings above the human, are you not?—which you all *profess* to believe—yet will not admit, outside, to help you bear your life and your daily experiences. You can only obtain proof of this by living so purely that you can develop yourselves to see and hear for yourselves. My part is to soothe and calm others on either side of the grave. We are all bound together by one long chain of mutual service. Ah! do not mistake me, I will not bore you with lengthy views of creed or faith, for I belong to no religious association. We only hold wide views of life, and our object is to hasten the Evolution of man, into the Divine—‘the ideal’—from the animal—to those enormous ‘Spiritual’ heights to which he is destined to arise, until he becomes a God, desiring peace fervently; desiring power ardently; drawing out all earthly ambition, all desire for sensation, all selfishness, desiring only that which is in the subjective world, and within himself.”

Louis was stirred by an intense attraction, comforted by the extraordinary power of a stimulating, fascinating, magnetic personality.

“You are further on your upward path than you are aware,” she said in the same musical voice. “For you were just thinking of the difficulties of women. The compassion you felt was the awakening divinity of your soul. The phenomenal world is merely the projection of the Real.”

“How do you know my thoughts? I have never seen you before.”

“It was your thinking that brought me to you, and I knew the exact time. The clock had struck the hour, so to speak, in your Destiny, that was bringing you to an important point in your life. You are learning, by this disappointment, the loneliness of every human soul. But you have yet to learn that there is no separation from the whole, inconsistent as

it sounds. Each soul must bear its own loneliness, and walk alone on its path to join the One. Ah! To the majority the unseen, which is the real world, is like a great lake that slumbers. To only the few developed and developing souls, is it active and Real."

"Yes. You are right! I was thinking when you approached, why I know not, that women still live in the bosom of treachery and injustice."

"And my work, friend and brother, is to lighten it, to help to give them before the end of this century an ideal justice."

She was silent. At last she spoke again.

"I now help in the spirit, that is, for your information, in my casual or astral body, or rather—vehicle (for bodies are only vehicles to use on different planes), and sometimes in my higher vehicle—my mental and more subtle body—in numerous tragedies taking place every moment in the world, or rather the planet you call your whole world, which is like a minute atom on an ant-hill compared to the Universe. I see women, and I have studied them and their position. I see them," here she smiled pityingly, "still through man having up to the present taken the lead in the arrangement of their affairs and position, as well as his own, bereft of initiative or of other intelligence, in consequence, trying to battle with a world in which everything is planned for the man—to suit the man and his point of view—including the possession of woman. A world in which the very laws are all against them—everything against women. I see them, crushed through their own vanity, which is encouraged by men and the world, by sex, femininity, by their mental inability, and by the mighty force that often crushes strong men by its strength. I see them on all sides draining to the dregs the misery and desolation of life, suffering the results of treachery around them on every side through their errors, inexperience of life and

its deceits, ignorance of injustices, dishonesty, and all the subtle influences that invariably surround all women before they gain the necessary insight to see this world as it really is. I see them living in an atmosphere of hatred, jealousy and envy, and nearly every woman trying to crush down the other for her own prominence, selfishness, or glorification. I see them in the gutters, in poignant despair, in the deepest, lowest degradation, caught in the various chains of some stupid circumstances which have arisen through man or his imperfect laws, which as yet women have not the mental ability and will to overcome, caught in that thick web of false laws, convention, custom, men have made in high places and low for their feet. There is still no path of safety for them, and lower down around all, are men, sneering and cheapening at every turn in the world the vehicle that gives them their own birth and life. Riches, I see, burst upon view at every turn in the midst of all this chaos, improperly used—used to degrade the world instead of improving it. We must begin to unweave this web; women must not be permitted to populate the world while gruesome, unfair obstacles are allowed to remain in the path of any woman in the streets or anywhere else in the world, while the future of woman is left to 'haphazard' or chance, and she has no protection from treachery by her Church, or the Legislation of her own town or country."

She continued: "Look! I can see a picture ahead. All women close together, demanding protection from their countries, the opening of all professions, a person appointed in every town to investigate her home life and environment, particularly in childhood; and in the case of orphans, they should be properly protected by some organisation in every town, in whatever position, high or low, they may be left, so that they may be guarded from wicked evil minds

and treacherous people entering their homes, if the race is to continue. The delights of the earth, freedom, independence, a chance for all alike, women and men. Woman's future comfort not left to the whim of one man for one woman, while others are left to fight a world of men, and the only way they can live, half of them, by scheming treachery and deceit. The world, no longer a huge, over-crowded market-place, a system which suited man who made the laws accordingly, and gave himself unlimited freedom and choice. Hundreds and thousands of women once supposed 'Marriage' was a way to Independence, when it was only another trap set in their way to tie them to slavery—sometimes 'gilded' certainly—and 'martyrdom.' What a curious religion we have made of beautiful Christianity by our creeds, improvements, and additions to it. We have sent missionaries to all parts of the World for twenty centuries, and given no real thought to our women, and especially the heartrending sorrows of the working-woman—the working-man's wife. Christian churches are still cherishing in their portals dirty flags won on battle-fields, still preaching from its pulpits on the heroic deeds of soldiers, thus encouraging war and the savage instincts of Humanity; never seeing that even now the daily lives of the working-woman—the working-man's wife—combining with her slavery of marriage and child-bearing, work for daily bread as well—constitute them the great noble martyrs, not soldiers glorying in their savage instincts. If the world were really a Christian world, it would by this time be, if Christianity had done its work, be one of Peace, Brotherhood, and Co-operation. Yet the real martyrs are, instead, preached at, still taught docility and obedience, still chained by the awful marriage laws made centuries ago, and encouraged to go on populating their countries, without any reward for doing so. 'No!' are saying

the women of my vision, 'Our fate shall be the first duty of our country if we are to be race-producers. From US arises the future population of the world, and men shall be required, instead of supporting one woman, to pay to government to give to all women equally that which he now heaps upon his own wife or own children for his own selfishness. Women, have as yet received no recognition or return for their valuable services of bringing mankind into the world. Man must be taught to esteem every woman, as another man's daughter or wife, and give to every woman the respect he wishes for his own. Instead, all around woman is the sickening sight of her unfortunate, degraded sisters being insulted, looked upon almost as another species, and only because they happen often perhaps to have been less fortunately placed than man's own protected womankind. May the day soon come when all women will be considered by the country as a valued sex, all as precious race-producers, to be guarded and protected, their interests considered of vital importance, to be taken up with greatest care and tenderness. It is not impossible that South Africa will still help in solving the problem between men and women workers, in this country, which has now reached its most critical stage. The immense difficulties incidental to women's work, it is said, by those who try to explain this question without actual experience of it themselves, or combined with real study of Life, are caused by the indefiniteness of the aim on the part of the women seeking employment, and the deficiencies in our own system of elementary education. To a certain extent this is true, but I think, underlying this is the real cause, the stupid sentimental 'ideal' of 'wifehood' at all costs, and motherhood being forced upon them in their youth, as their first fit and proper path, and next comes romantic sentimentality, weak, wavering, artificial

femininity which they have to outgrow, that which is called 'femininity,' mistaken for real true strong independent womanliness. This ideal is now only possible for the few, that is, combined with Marriage, so their best years are often wasted, seeking this before any real work is begun. But, this is the ideal still held up by Churches and country, which, while inducing this state of mind in women from infancy for the benefit of country, population, and race, leaves no recompense, if she misses this extolled motherhood, wifehood and Marriage, and she is left then, too late to fight her own battles, unarmed against the men and the world her own sex populates, most terribly handicapped, as well by sex, bodily, mentally, and by the world's most retarding conventional thoughts and 'ideals' concerning her. There are more important questions than hers to be considered ; first in this country men think concerning their interests, and policies for War. Australia is a young nation, but she begins with equal rights for men and women. Here, we see thousands of unaided women, all on the wrong path, ending in disappointment, hopelessness, their position, the direct result of this conventional reasoning and tyranny, or rather non-reasoning, and this 'ideal.' These are of course the unintelligent women, who imagine Marriage is a goal to be desired above all others ; then having wasted time, they are not fit to battle with difficulties, incidental to any work they take up, and the competition they find on all sides, instead of that Brotherhood and Aid, which should be there. Others, through perhaps being brought up in the same way, are unversed in the useful but unromantic lore, called knowledge of the world, and have not the smallest conception of the difficulty of maintaining lives, their burdens being borne always by others. They have been taught to accept the good things of this earth, as flowers receive rain and sunshine, and are suddenly, by some unforeseen

chance, left alone to battle with the World, sometimes with children, to make it more impossible, and then, what happens? From that point arise the evils we profess not to understand, but which it is time we did. Then it is that women know their own sex for what it is, and the men outside for what they are. Then they learn to hate all other women for their womanly (?) selfishness, carelessness, unkindness, deceit, wickedness and scorn, then they learn and teach their daughters to wreck homes if they can, before the other more fortunately-placed women win them with their lying, scandalous tongues, trying to push them down farther by scheming deceit and intrigue, and practise every well-known artifice and contemptible falsehood 'attributed to womanhood' from time immemorial; then they learn to steal from them their menkind, and teach their daughters the old lesson they were foolish enough not to learn for themselves before, to crush out all kind, nice feelings they ever had for each other in their youth, to crush out all the Christian sentiments they had preached to them by the lips of men from pulpits who never knew and never could know 'woman's environment,' and its difficulties. Then they teach them to steal from other women their natural protectors, their fathers, husbands, brothers, sons and homes, and ruin them if they can, out of sheer revenge, for the injustices, lies, carelessness and scorn of all the world to women, particularly the women themselves to each other. Australian women have reason to be grateful for the advanced thought of their country in granting them absolute political freedom and equality with men, which is a position unique in this world's history. Men have talked of the blessings of representative government, but few here have pictured women actually as partners in such a form of government. Even America, the birthplace of present-day democracy, never either thought of applying the

fundamental principles of the Declaration of Independence to their Women. Countries to be perfect should have no sex limitations, like the new, good Australian constitution. In everything, should women have the same equality and rights, *as are expected by each sane, law-abiding, naturalised man, and to secure these rights, governments for men were instituted.* In Australia, women now vote on equal terms, and are eligible for membership in National Parliament, and probably will ascend to the dignity of office. This is an unparalleled triumph for the woman suffrage party, and the men of Australia are to be held up to the greatest admiration and esteem, because they have outgrown prejudice and grown in democratic sentiment, that they can live peaceably, intelligently, and calmly, *in equal rights.* But it took twenty years before their own women asked for the franchise. The arguments for woman suffrage are also the arguments for women entering Parliament—to speak of the needs of their own sex, and for children, for new marriage, divorce and other laws, in their just interests, and many other questions concerning their own sex, upon which they are more fitted to judge than men.

“But our women are such cowards. They still hate, and are jealous of each other. They are still afraid of the hostile press and the comic papers, and the ignorant sneer of the unintelligent, coarse minds of the lower class, and so prefer to allow their women and children to go on and suffer injustices and neglect, than that their voice shall be heard, lest one sneer should be given them. Nothing, nothing can alter this, until true women, good and marvellously intelligent women of our present century (for instance, the recognised, most perfect lecturer of our day, a woman who understands life and woman’s position in every phase), enter Parliament, and help with men to make the laws for their own sex, and show men the other side of

women's questions. To show men that which they often cannot see, their own point of view hiding their true vision. Intelligent women, with the impulses and emotions of womanhood and motherhood, are necessary for the making of just laws concerning their own sex. Such women are needed to voice the laws that touch them in their dearest, closest interests, for how can they be made, in fairness and justice, by men who do not understand those states and interests, and who do not know women at all but half their lives, know only that absurd impression of her, which she wishes men to know, always coloured by the women they have happened to meet in their own lives, their own life's path being entirely different from that of any other individual, woman or man? How can they fit these impressions of women to all? Always are we all inclined to judge from our own point of view, but ours is only a tiny view of Life. Then and then only, will the world be happier. But women are themselves much to blame. They have only cared up to the present each for her own individual happiness. There has been no Unity, no Co-operation. And man has only cared for his own wife or own children, his own womenkind, and helps often to injure and push down all the rest—who are not to be taken into his consideration. They exist to serve his purpose, his interests, his gratification. He sees insults and slander heaped upon them on all sides without trying to help and reorganise. There are men—it is not an unusual attitude to see, as one studies human nature—who imagine still that women exist to serve his purposes solely, his passions, and who, if they happen to meet a woman who has outgrown this particular form of mediævalism, and subjection, and, instead, endeavours to put him in his proper place, and to teach him also to outgrow such ideas, turns upon her and slanders her, adding with the old sneer the remark that she is unsexed—in revenge ;

unsexing herself by doing man's work in the world. Slander being often 'a man's form of weapon' to use against women, because it is a subtle weapon from which woman cannot defend herself. And often still, out of revenge if his vanity has been hurt, he teaches his children and womenkind to help him crush down, if he can, all other women outside who cross his path. And his women generally do, instead of fighting for their own sex, or feeling as their own the injustices, degradation, and insults of men toward other women. — Those they see scorned in the streets, or in any phase of life, bereft often of their dearest earthly possessions, while they, the more fortunate ones, have fathers, husbands, or brothers who fight for them, and guard, and make positions for them. More often, instead, those very women stand by and help men by their thoughtless speech, and their wicked tongues, to injure and degrade their own sex further. Perhaps those poor women have, instead, had only others—not to fight for them, but to deceive and take away, instead of giving, and to grasp by treachery and scheming, all they possess. At the present day, dreadful as it is to relate, women are still careless of the emotions and feelings of all their own sex, helping rather if they can to injure them, content with their own happiness when they are happy, and own pleasure, seeing only the sad effects of their own carelessness about each other in the past, but never trying to understand and deal with it from the Cause. Their attitude thereby increases the lower natures and selfishness of their own menkind, making them sometimes brutes of depravity. Louis Volvois, the world's wickedness to women, and its present laws, read to me like nightmares, after living for some time in an atmosphere of Love, Unity, Brotherhood, Equality and Peace, where all are struggling to push on in the Service of Humanity, instead of one against the other. But the time will

dawn, even in this World, when all women's souls will be as soft and sweet as ripe golden fruit for each other's woes. 'The firm little woman,' as says Marcel Prevost, 'will herself then rise above those days of *la brutalité et l'ironie*.' But from the country's and man's point of view, some men say, this is not desirable. That a superfluity of women, helpless at its feet, is a more delightful state of things. Once unfortunate women were described as necessary evils, no one attempting to bring about women's happiness as a whole. But in spite of all they will rise, and soon the journals will be full of them, of their wonderful doings, not as now, principally as adventures of second-rate actresses, photographs of professional and Society beauties, out of the 'half world,' or the World of Society, but, instead, all as respected, cultured, interesting women, of great and useful ambitions, or of good and charitable works, of Arts, of Crafts. Women who combine with all these 'l'amour du sport,' and that feeling also, so strong in their breast that it will chase away all weakness and unhealthiness of thought and mind. And with work, 'surtout c'est l'amour de la grande vitesse qui nous domine.'"

"Is this real? Am I dreaming?" asked Louis Volvois at last. "Indeed, I begin to think you are not real, that my brain must be a kind of battery for the unconscious thoughts of some very strong personalities."

"Live on!" returned the beautiful-looking figure before his vision, "and have for your object a perpetual desire to gain a deeper understanding of our common human nature. Help Nature, and work with her, and she will regard you as one of her creators, and will obey you. Help on 'Justice for women.' That will never be while men's mental eyes are vitiated by prejudice, blinded by other women's minds, by passion, ignorance and self-love.

At this period of history you know so little concerning yourselves. Look within yourself for God, the life-force that babbles in the waters, that kisses the flowers in the breeze. It is the tendency of modern thought to depreciate the little you know. Unless this is opposed, the mass who follow such leaders as Darwin and his kind must become Agnostics. You must know that the forces of God now active in the World were not to be ignored or stamped out by the self-sufficiency of learned ignorance. God is Supreme Reason and not Supreme Un-Reason. Help, until Justice and Security for all women are both established, help with deeds of benevolence for every phase of suffering and misfortune. What God requires of man in this body can never be done after."

The last words she spoke seemed like a sob. Raising her hands towards the sky, she continued,—

"Oh, God! King! country! give them a little more Justice!"

When Louis Volvois looked again, she had vanished.

As nearly every other man would also say in this outer world, in his waking consciousness, he of course said, "Why, I must have been dreaming."

He had come here, determined to end his life, not as a madman, but as a deep-thinking, sane man of the world, and he refused to be comforted or mollified. He had chosen spot and time; the sky, environment, seemed fitting his death, and mood. For an hour previous to taking the final step which would effectively sever him from his material self, he lay reviewing his life, and this train of thought which had occurred to him, and decided it must be a foreshadowing of the future. He knew this came to those at the point of death. From the spirit the mysteries of the world, the past, and the limit of the future, are only hidden by its birth in the flesh. Occasionally, the divine memory of the spirit wanders to the outer

circle of the bodily brain, and then Intuition comes like a light in the darkness, showing these visions of the spirits Past and Future, to whom little earth lives are but like days and hours in a life that goes on eternally. But the Light soon fades while the flesh is still there to obscure it, and then our poor spirit, encased in matter and materialism, remembers only its present little earth-life, and cannot tell from whence it has come here to this point, or whither it will go, or even the reason of its being.

His subjective mind and senses had been opened somehow. But his visions of the future were growing dim again. Melancholy thoughts came, and he began to think only of the pleasure it would be soon to converse with Doris when they should meet in the spirit, for he truly believed this, in some other world. What entrancing journeys, flights, discoveries undreamed of in the flesh, they would perhaps be able to take together. He did not know that to destroy himself, to die in that way, was merely to rid himself of the most useful instrument we possess that brought him in touch with the physical world, and would have a disastrous, unnatural consequence, that of assuming his astral before it had grown fit and ready for use. He looked at his watch and thought it was getting time to die, before the sleeping world began to stir. "Ah! Love is stronger than Death," he murmured and plunged madly into the sea. The great waves caught him and carried him out, until at last he looked simply like a bit of sea-weed floating upon them, tossed at their mercy. At last this speck disappeared. The wind heaved her mighty sighs, it seemed, of unutterable sadness.

Later, his body—his mere body—was found, but as regards himself, Louis Volvois, he only had become lost to the sight of the majority in the world for a period.

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So good, kind, beautiful Lady Ambrose's party had a sad ending. The three shocks were about enough to unnerve the strongest man. Doris's death, the finding of Andrea Malley dead in his room the next day, the ghastly details of that tragedy are best left out of this story, and then the drowning of Louis Volvois.

All the guests without hesitation, packed and "tipped," and flew.

"I am beginning to feel there is no luck in the house," Lady Ambrose said to her husband, "after that weird experience of the jewels; and now all these catastrophes—let us get out of it. I am nervous lest the Countess has been having too many *séances* and experimenting in Spiritualism wrongly, or attracting the wrong sort of spirits. Perhaps this is the work of malign spirits, who knows? It certainly appears like it."

"My dear, let us give up these sort of experiments in Spiritualism," said her husband, calmly but firmly. "It is much too sacred, I can perceive, judging only from what I have now seen with my own rational eyes and heard with my everyday ears, to be dealt with carelessly, as it often is nowadays, when the atmosphere is not kept pure, almost sacred as a temple, and free from conflicting magnetisms.

He was silent for some moments.

"People who are too much interested in the scientific aspect of their own immortal minds, and indeed in all psychological phenomena, and with a will to believe, can, I suppose, believe anything they like. I am just an ordinary man, and I intend to remain one. In my plain way I think, before all investigation, experiments, must come first, babyhood. Yes—first, I say, babyhood. The childhood of true purity, simplicity, truth, perfect goodness, moral and spiritual growth before—*séances* and 'experiments,' eh, wife?—eh, dear wife?"

PART II
THE INNER KERNEL

CHAPTER XV

GLIMPSES OF REAL LIFE

"Plunge boldly into the thick of life, and seize it where you will, it is always interesting."—GOETHE.

SIX months after the house-party had broken up, Valerie Trelawney was driving alone in the midst of the most multitudinous throbbing of life—the bustling life and traffic of a densely-populated part of London. She suddenly leaned forward, the expression on her face was of astonishment. "A man with a face like Napoleon's," she thought, "that monster who deluged Europe in bloodshed."

She told the driver to stop. "Turn, drive slowly back, and stop near the station I have just left. Wait then until I tell you to go on again. I must see that again," she said to herself, "one does not often see a striking face like that."

The cabman drove slowly back, and Valerie, by changing her position, was enabled to see the man again.

"What a world! Is it really possible that a man with a face like that should be in this twentieth century, only a bootblack? Impossible!" Yet this was true. She found the man again and watched, unnoticed. Cabs, carts, waggons, omnibuses, all stopped and went on again. Just outside the station were two subways, with stone steps leading down to an underground terminus, each railed off by iron railings projecting from the wall of a big building. There was a distance of a few feet of paving between

the subways and their railings. There, between them, the man had pitched his paraphernalia. There, through that, he earned his livelihood. He stood proudly in front of his carefully-arranged materials; his business was much more practical than that of the pavement artist across the way, and he put his hands into his pockets, surveying the passing World contentedly, as it was represented by the streams of hurrying life outside that great London railway station. "He holds himself as proudly as his double, Napoleon, at the head of an army!" thought the watcher. "Comparisons are odious!"

He was dressed in a respectable suit of clothes; his curiously striking head, so like pictures and statues of Napoleon, was crowned with a serge cap, the shoes on his feet much the worse for wear. He perceived a friend, a loafer, leaning against the wall and went towards him, leaving his carefully-selected corner now to the full view of all observers. The friend met him half way.

"Hullo, Bill! What's the matter? Although your feet always did belong to a bigger person, yer 'ead wasn't ever before a misfit! But you've now got the same expression on yer face yer always reserves for the temperance lecturer."

"Got a light? or a 'quid' for sixpenn'orth of brandy?"

"Dunno as I 'arve," said the respectable-looking bootblack-like Napoleon. "Ah! it's not the public-houses that do the 'arm in these days. It's our sordid, miserable surroundings, and 'aving no 'omes." There was a pause, then followed some ejaculatory swears.

"'Arve a look again! Will yer?"

"Yes. But don't use bad language. That kind of thing is calculated to 'untidy the 'air,' sir," returned the bootblack, pulling out a little cardboard box from his pocket, on which was painted a pretty

woman, with a full bust and waist, so small in comparison with the rest of her body it could have been dispensed with altogether—a box that sprang open with a touch.

“One bloomin’ match left an’—no quid. Gawd knows it’s gospel truth. No kid. If that goes out we’re done. But I’ll tell yer what yer want, old chap. You want a pension on which to support your liver and your big pedal accessories for the rest of your natural life! But, the pity of it is, yer ain’t got it. I’ll tell yer wot we are! Victims! of those Ecclesiastical Commissioners blokes! Twelve bob a week they want for the new ‘ouses they ‘ave put up. An’ no sub-letting. Four rooms you can’t swing a cat in, no pianers, no gardens. The h’Act ‘as failed its object and the new ‘ouses can’t be h’occupied by the un-‘oused. Damn ‘em an’ their h’interference. The ‘ouses built from an 1897 Act, for the poorest classes, were filled with people earning 22s. and 26s. weekly. The Corporation must ‘ouse the proper poor, the drunkard, the vicious, the criminal, who have been turned out of their slums and made worse by desperation! 50,000 people, I say, dispossessed of their slums by the ‘h’Improvement Trust,’ h’an only 8000 of ‘em ‘oused by the Corporation. That’s wot they call benefiting the poor. ‘Ousing the poor! That’s wot they call h’advantage and of benefit to the community, un‘ousing and unsettling ‘em suddenly. That’s their grand ‘ousing of the poor. Great masses of poor shipwrecked men, women and children like us. I believe there’s a sort of new spec goin’ on, or h’investment. Municipal h’enterprise, slum demolishing, purchase of slum property for resale. We’re victims, that’s wot we are. Victims of the twentieth century! An’ look at the poor h’unemployed. No work for ‘em to do by day, an’ no sleeping accommodation by night. An’ marriage—that’s another cause. ‘Alf the women ought to be

in domestic service in comfortable places, instead o' married, trying to keep up 'omes on nothin', an' bringing more children inter the world, an' dragging down the 'usbands. Oh! we're all victims. All of us!"

They each got their pipes ready. Both took off their caps and sheltered one match.

"Perhaps it is a Napoleon-like brain that selected this spot," thought the watcher, looking at the few square feet of pavement on which the man had so ingeniously made his home, his business, and actually made his livelihood, had pitched his tent, sheltered in by the railings on either side. "Martin's Boot-polish" was printed on his big box, which he used, when needed, for a seat. Above his head, pinned against the wall, was a gorgeously-coloured picture of the King and Queen in coronation dress, possibly begged for from one of Smith's bookstalls below, in the station. A bunch of violets, given him by a flower-girl near, with a baby on one arm in a shawl, was now in an earthenware jar; a tiny mirror hanging against the wall; a cup, saucer, glass vase on another box, with a gold fish in it, and some provisions, completed this extraordinary apartment, portioned off ingeniously from the pavement by the man.

After lighting the pipe he caught sight of the woman in the vehicle and sprang towards her.

"Can't I sell yer a gold-fish, lady? Twenty-carat gold—ah! and none o' yer brassy gold o' Park Lane, either. No? lady. Come, don't say no. I have a wife and family to support, and my profession ain't too brilliant a one. No? Oh, better far to 'ave a little gold-fish for a pet than to kiss a bow-legged, brutish-jawed, flat-nosed, bulging-eyed bull-dog, like you ladies do now, and—only for my wife's sake, lady. She 'as ten living and one underground to provide for—oh! 'Icks Beach 'isself

couldn't solve sich a problem of expenditure, 'pon my— Lady, I began life as a poet. That's why I'm so 'ard up now—'coz, of course, I got no screw; but I guess if I kept on at it I'd have shamed Shakespeare and taken the shine out of lots of 'em wots the idol of England instead of being 'ere a' shining boots. I'd have been drinking my sherry wine with the best of 'em by this time, with a beautiful laurel wreath on my baby brow. But buy a gold-fish, lady? twenty-carat gold!"

"Drive straight on," said Valerie Trelawney to the driver—"straight on until I tell you to stop. It's not much use watching any more—I've seen as much as I want to for the last month; but I was interested in the man's face, so like that monstrosity who flooded Europe with blood. The world is brimful of humour. To see only in an insignificant drive a more wonderful sight than at a theatre, because it is real. Napoleon's double, happy, contented, confined between two railings, polishing the boots of our present-day humanity. I wonder if he is Napoleon reincarnated."

The cabman drove on. He was getting to a low, dirty neighbourhood near Vauxhall. On one side flaring theatrical posters, grimy little shops, high lodging-houses; public-houses on the corners, surrounded by most brutal-looking men and women, and dreadful street-stalls.

A man stood outside his remarkably odious-looking fried-fish shop, on a corner from which a passage led to a slum. As the cab passed from this foulsome den a live, crouching figure emerged. "It"—one could not, after seeing its face, call it anything else, could scarcely describe it as a man or a woman, or in any other way—"It" was the most fitting pronoun in Valerie's mind, as in horror she watched it gazing longingly at the repulsive fish. Then it turned away despondingly, as if such luxuries

were far, far beyond its reach. "It" had once been a woman.

Valerie Trelawney's face changed. She told the driver to go back quickly, looking frightened as if she had seen a ghost—come suddenly face to face with some awful reality, like one who had a solemn revelation.

"My God!" said she, "you have shown me an appalling sight. For some reason which is too great for me to solve, you have brought me face to face, without any warning, with a—'a woman without a soul.' Philosophical curiosity is the first step towards the science of self-culture. Be that as it may, I think now that I shall never be gay and bright again. My life seems to have gone out of me. Perhaps it really is that a cloud has come over the earth. Humour? I was mistaken. There is no humour in it, in life at the present day. That is divine, something of Heaven, and we are all in—Hell. This world is Hell! Humour? We have no time to look for that. It seems to me now that we should have no time for anything else but for service to Humanity. No time except for work, work, work, the work that will help our fellow-creatures out of their hell—their own particular hell. Our energies must be first directed by Wisdom, and Will must take the place of desire. For we have only each one of us a few short years in the flesh, perhaps not a year, a week, a day or another moment—how can we ever tell? Yet we dare to waste it, and let our brothers and sisters, who are part of ourselves, all travelling the same way, remain in their hells—yet we all go on our own ways laughing. Still, in this century, while such misery is around, never again will that picture be removed from my vision. Whenever I am bright and gay I shall always see that woman's face to make me sorrowful; " will always remain in my mind a living picture,

exactly as I have seen it to-day. A woman, almost unrecognisable, yet destined by God to be the mystical medium between man and Him. A woman, a symbol of the Spiritual and material world, but, instead, brutalised, and only a filthy, unclean body, carrying, apparently, a dead soul. Dead, dead, dead! without one spark of life left in it, surely. A mere body, crawling along like a microbe, saturated with alcohol and evil thoughts, and, as all thoughts live and go out into the world in all sorts of repulsive forms, creating further evil and misery all around her."

So when Valerie Trelawney reached her home that night she began to commune with herself, deep in meditation, and was thus unconsciously following out the lines laid down by her spiritual unseen friends as steps in the advancement of her Evolution.

"Those who follow the line of Causation understand the Law of Time and Sequential Evolution. This begins at the turning-point, where the wave of Life commences to return." This was the distinct telepathic message which came to her from the inner subjective World, or, rather, "the World of Thought" which will perhaps be more generally understood. Presently she took up a paper and found it was *Truth*, that dull-green, apparently unattractive newspaper. In its pages she read the following, which was a list comparing the punishments lately inflicted for injuries to women opposite those inflicted for other crimes, given by some magistrates still in the twentieth century. This seemed indeed another message from the spirits, and, at any rate, was a fitting completion to her Study of Life, for one day at least.

This is the true account cut out of *Truth* which Valerie Trelawney read with disgust—

"Ayr Police Court—Before B——L——.—Patrick Redyard, vagrant, convicted of assaulting J. Brownson, by throwing a pail of boiling water at

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him, with assaulting Mary Brownson, by kicking her in the face, and with assaulting Alex. Brownson by biting his thumb. The Brownsons manage a model lodging-house where accused was staying. Fined 30s. or twenty-one days—(Note, 30s. only).

“Compare with next—

“Gateshead Police Court—Before——.—Robert Roberts, charged with stealing two cakes (value one penny) from a shop. Two months.”

“Lochgelly, Police Court—Before B.——J.——.—

Thomas Smith, charged with assaulting his wife. He thrashed the woman, and kicked her from room to room, injuring her so badly that she had to be attended by a doctor. The magistrate observed that it was altogether a serious affair, and fined him 40s.

“Compare with following :—

“Aylsham Petty Sessions—Before Messrs—— and Col.—— and Lord ——.—Henry Jones, charged with poaching, one month ; and William Jones, fourteen days.

“Southampton Borough Police Court—Before Messrs —— and other magistrates.—Sarah Williams, charged with stealing a piece of bacon, value 1s. 6d. from a shop window. One month” (more important punishment than even the man who assaulted and kicked his wife from room to room, who was only fined 40s.).

“Birmingham Police Court—Before——.—Charles Yarmouth, convicted of assaulting his wife. He caused a wound on her head which required surgical treatment. Once before he broke her jaw. At various times she had spent 23 weeks in a hospital owing to his brutality. She was granted a separation order, and defendant fined 20s. and costs.

“Compare with following :—

"Torquay Police Court — Before——.—John Edwards, charged with stealing a pair of boots. One month.

"Matlock Petty Sessions — Before——.—John Goldly, charged with stealing 4 lbs. of beef. Two months.

"Molton Petty Sessions—Before——.—William ——, charged with cruelty to two pigs. Previously convicted of cruelty. Fined 20s. (See above. Same amount, Charles Yarmouth for assaulting his wife).

"Spilgate Petty Sessions—Jeremiah Gray, charged with trespassing in pursuit of game, and two others aiding and abetting him. Fined £5 each, including costs.

"Stockport Police Court—John Smith, charged with cruelty to his three children, of drunken habits, neglected and ill-treated his children, behaving badly to his wife, and whilst drunk tried to put one little boy, aged 4, up the chimney, with result that he was badly burned back and thigh. One month." (From *Truth*).

Specimens of some present-day magistrates, famous only for the fearfully bad law they dispense. From brute force to scientific strength the world tries to slowly emerge. From chaos to order. Moral influence is surely not to be despised." And "Women should be grateful to the editor and the contributor of *Truth*, for these particulars!" thought Valerie Trelawney. "But oh! Comparisons are indeed odious." She had now been among men and women who can only be compared and described as "poor weak children for whom Life, as it is to-day, has been too hard."

CHAPTER XVI

ANOTHER MEETING OF LUCIUS AND VALERIE TRELAWNEY

"Seeking nothing, he gains all, foregoing self, the Universe grows 'I.'"

"The more life expands and grows, the more it becomes active to the universal harmony, and the more easily it escapes perceptions and desires of the physical senses."

"Not a desire but in obedience to the Laws.—" LOUIS CLAUDE DE SAINT MARTIN (*The Unknown Philosopher*).

IN the air the freshness of morning! And such a morning! Upon the roads, trees, hedges, window-panes of the houses, frost's dainty lace-work designs, in marvellous variety and complexity, were seen, not yet melted by the delightful winter sun. The roads and ruts were still firm to the tread. Men and women walked gaily along, full of buoyancy and life, thankful for being alive. The crisp air filled the lungs, coming straight from the rough sea, which swept its way into the pretty little Bay of Paramé.

The wonderful little walled-in town of St Malo, like a ghost in the purple and grey distance, looked down upon its sister towns, lying calm and quiet, dotted about the sweet coast of lovely and romantic old Bretagne. Her own peculiarities, which distinguish her from the rest of France, contrast in certain points of resemblance with our own lovely Cornwall and North Wales. Some people describe it as Celtic and un-French; but it is not always the most cosmopolitan of us who know our France, a

country known in some of the oldest and sweetest legends of the World.

Valerie Trelawney was walking alone. She moved quickly on past the new hotels, until she came to the country, on her way to a quiet old-world village, with its church crammed with human relics of saints and wonderful old tapestries and pictures. She had arranged this day to meet Lucius Macnamary there.

The year had passed.

Lady Ambrose had another quaint, old-world house here, which she rarely used, with windows that hung "o'er the tide," and it was she who had arranged this meeting, unknown to her husband.

Valerie was half-an-hour later than the time appointed.

Drawing near she began to smile, thinking of Lucius waiting for her with his books, waiting patiently in the sweet long low drawing-room of the wonderful old Norman house she knew so well, and thought of that other meeting when she had burst in upon his reverie so unexpectedly. She now knew that even in that first moment there had seemed in them a direct immediate intuition of oneness.

"What a long time! Is it possible that a year has passed?" she thought.

At last she reached the gateway, and entered the house, and the room where he was waiting.

"Valerie! is it you?—at last!" he exclaimed, rising from his chair.

He had been sitting, deep in reverie—now his habit—surrounded, almost buried, in books and some old and musty papers. Books were now his food.

"Yes! Lucius."

"And you have come for good!" he said quietly and calmly, taking her hands in his. "Valerie! If you could only know what these long months have been to me—this year allotted out to each of us for meditation. I wonder if you will understand, if I

try to tell you. Shall I try to tell you? Yes? Well, come and sit here—there—where the light from the window shows me your face.”

He was holding her hands very tightly in his, and he drew her to the window seat. Somehow the thought came to him that she was also changed in some way, as indeed he was. Her voice had lost its gay laughing quality. The laugh which had so fascinated him when first he met her would now sound strange, he thought, coming from this older, somewhat altered woman. She moved towards the great sofa that was placed in a corner by the huge antique fireplace. There was silence between them, broken once or twice only by the burning of the wooden logs and pines as they crackled and smoked. Then Lucius spoke again, half murmuring, with now and then a flash in his eyes as he looked towards her that spoke of his love, in spite of all his pretended quietness and studied calmness.

“It is twelve months now and more since you left—twelve whole months. From morning to evening, and then the black night, morning again, another day, then another week of dreariness, emptiness, but filled, every day, every hour, every moment, with thoughts of you—longing for you!” A red flush came to his face, and his arms tightened around her now, while she tried in vain to get away. “Sometimes, with all the savage instinct in me, sometimes in my loneliness, it seems to me I have cried deep down in my heart and longed for you, in the way that an absurd child cries out for the one who brings him the most pleasure and guards him, whom he thinks he has lost.”

“Oh, how very silly!” said Valerie, laughing. “Who would turn back to enjoy the toys of infancy?”

“Whom he thinks he has lost,” continued Lucius in the same voice, “and may never see her face

again, feeling unable to live without her. It is an odd idea, isn't it, Valerie? but I swear I speak truly of those long weary months, of all my inward thoughts. But you think I have not seen you?" he said again.

Valerie looked at him quickly, her eyes scanning his face as she strove to read his thoughts, to anticipate all he was about to say, before he spoke. There was a slightly anxious look on her face. However, she was silent, thinking how very changed he was, older, more lined and greyer.

"Do you think I have not seen you?—Not with these earthly, physical eyes, I'll own, but with my mental spiritual eyes," he said, half seriously, half laughingly. Although carelessly spoken by him, this was, as a matter of fact, correct. His solitude, his study, and consequent meditation, had been intensely developing his soul's growth and powers. Those who have the advantages of silent meditation and oblivious composure will find a subtle natural gift within themselves of higher intuitional powers that few dream of, discovering in themselves a natural gift which enables them to see mentally, read thoughts of people apparently far away, and often touch the sepulchre of the past, and notify what is to come. Lucius's elbow was upon the arm of a great chair; he now leaned his head upon his hand, murmuring—

"To the calmly gathered thought,
The innermost of truth is taught."

"Believe me, dear, there is a Law also of reflection, by which no knowledge which the race has once acquired in the past can be regarded as hopelessly lost to the present. I have been learning, Valerie, studying and learning, day by day unfolding. They who as yet recognise only the natural life and the body, know very little indeed, compared with those who are so far unfolded in their interior natures as to

recognise the soul and seven senses. For when the soul, with its vehicle, is once opened to communion, the natural man, with eyes of understanding, is enabled to look two ways, inward, as well as outward. He to whom the soul lends her eyes, as well as ears, may have knowledge of not only his own past history, but that of the planet, as beheld in the pictures imprinted in the magnetic light whereof the planet's memory consists. For there are actual ghosts of events, names of past circumstances, shadows on the protoplasmic mirror, which can be evoked. When one finds the senses of the soul, Valerie, one finds that matter is only solidified spirit, overshadowed by a Divine harmony." He was silent again for a few moments.

"The fire under the crucible does not harm the gold, but refines it; the dross alone falls away under the test, and of dross we are well rid; and so it is with man's love, passions, and emotions. Truth wears no mask, bows at no shrine, seeks neither place nor applause. She only asks a hearing. Some of us are allowed, at certain points of our destiny, to look into their inner selves once or twice in a lifetime, and if our existence has been full of goodness and love, we feel uplifted and strong in abiding truth, and able to overcome the world. From the Soul of the Universe are all those souls which in all the World are tossed up and down, and severally divided, and we all foolishly imagine we are then separate existences. Creeping things are changed into watery things, and those of things living in the water to those of things living on land, and airy ones into men, and human souls that lay hold on immortality are changed into holy angels, and so on and so on until we go into the spheres of God; and this is the most perfect glory of the soul. Ah! But the soul entering into the body of a man, if it continues selfish and evil, shall neither taste immortality,

nor be a partaker of the good, until it has passed through a cycle of World-purifying, but will be drawn back again through the same ways, unripened, awaiting a spiral or cycle of time, until it may go forward once more to a condition of illumination by the spirit. Clairvoyance, when it is real, is seeing with the spiritual eyes, which can run through all the history of the past, through which one grows into vision of even the abodes of disembodied spirits radiated with higher Love. They appear in semblances of angels' forms, and the sight of the glorious scale of heavenly architecture beyond human conception holds the seer, when at last he becomes a true mystic, a genuine seer, spell-bound. They are upheld by some perfect Divine law of locomotion and of atmosphere. Blest indeed is he whose privilege it is to enjoy that fuller Knowledge, not blind faith, that there is a limitless Eternity beyond this little sphere, in which the soul may grow and grow and unfold."

Lucius Macnamary, the studious book-worm, the sceptic, pessimist, and now the mystic, the hermit, the student, the seer, had indeed begun to grow, to unfold his Divine possibilities. When you look at the form of a man you do not see the true man. The true man is the shadow of the soul's impulses. He had begun to shake off all the old errors of materialism and childish superstitions of creeds and conventional orthodox thought, striking out into new paths of Truth and of Light, and for the first time had begun to realise how, before by the World and Life as he had found it and lived it, in the World, his real eyes had been held that he could not see. His soul at last was beginning to perceive and learn the mystery of Life and Death, and the glorious Truth of Spiritual Immortality. In the process of soul-development, of deep meditation, spiritual understanding and vision, there is a rapture and abstraction, such as he was

passing through now, just as one would feel when one catches the first glimpse of the face of some dear loved one, passed over to the silent shore. As one's whole being grows into harmonious attunement, all human affections become equally steadfast and in earnest. Thus, one reaches and finds the polarity of being, the polarity of the animal and spiritual body, and then the Light of Wisdom dawns on the soul. Then, then alone, there is a sense of vision that the vulgar cannot see—a sense of hearing that the ignorant cannot hear, and a loving companionship that the misanthropic cannot understand.

These heights can only be gained through silent oblivious composure, learning to concentrate all latent desires upon exalted subjects until all vibrations are harmonious. Elevated and ripened souls on quitting their bodily envelope, leave behind them all the evil passions of their humanity, and retain only the love of Truth and Goodness; but inferior, unripe souls retain their earthly imperfections, and passions woven in a web of selfishness, that retards them from spiritual blossom and fruitage. There is another Law in Nature called Destruction. It is necessary things should be destroyed, so that they should be reborn, regenerated, rebuilt up. The Spirit life is a whole World of varied conditions and relationships, of which the earthly life is only the most obscure reflex. Music and harmony were brought to earth by the first soul that came from Heaven. It is generally known that two instruments tuned to the same key and placed sufficiently near each other, are in such harmony that when one is struck the corresponding note in the other vibrates in unison. All spiritual culture begins by reconstructing oneself, as Lucius Macnamary had discovered.

"Power comes only from freedom," he said, after

a little silence ; "but to be free, one must cut loose from any bond of slavery which has held one in the past. Spiritual repose is attained by turning the eyes inward, and schooling the sight from outward things to inward ones. New ideas have to be planted on clean places. Divine ideas must be studied to touch man's true latitude, aspect, and position in the Universe, in relation to his previous births, his origin, source, element, and his Ultimate Destiny. This Knowledge opens the vision to the relation of the mortal, to the immortal, of the finite to the Infinite, of man to God. With ideas larger, loftier, grander, more exalted, comprehensive and complete, man will recognise the reign of immutable and absolute Law, unchanging for ever, and that for man individually, there is only the Eternal Now."

Lucius Macnamary was in a curious mood. Spiritual forces had been engendered by his meditation, and devotional aspirations for some time, and Valerie Trelawney and he continued to sit together again in silence, he now holding her hands clasped in his.

"Yes, with my mental eyes I have seen you—your spiritual form ; and it must be that what I have seen is really you. It was your real, very self that kept me company here. The picture before my eyes was your subjective real self ever with me. It was your inward spirit—the eternal. You and I, sitting now together in our physical bodies our forms are clothed in, are the illusions, the shadows, envelopes, of the real selves we are often too gross to be aware of or see ; for our real selves know no limitations or separation. No ! It is not Valerie who has been away from me all these months, following out her schemes and devices in solitude, but just her material, objective, unimportant self or body. I say again your soul has always kept me company here, for I believe sometimes by my love I have

dragged you to me. Where there is true love there is union, immediate presence and contact, even though mere bodies be held apart by obstacles and thousands of miles. Space is, I have learnt, only imaginary. When I awake from thinking of you, for it is true in my real sleep—and you will say I am always half-dreaming now—you are ever the central figure, I see you again and cry out, 'Valerie! Valerie!' Then I get up and dress, and go out for my long, long walks, and return to my study and my books, and try once more to put thoughts of you away from me. But I forget, and find myself thinking that every moment is bringing your physical presence nearer, nearer to me, for I get into the old habits of thinking again. Now, at last you have come, my waiting is over, my solitude past. I have you now, mine for all eternity; my misery is past."

Valerie Trelawney was looking into the fire, watching the fickle, quivering flames and curling smoke. She heard all he was saying. The old love of listening to his perfect voice had come back to her. "I don't know you!" she said simply, a little later. "You are not Lucius Macnamary."

He laughed and said:

"You are not looking at me, Valerie."

He was bending over her, gazing intently into her face.

"I have been here for one year, with only my books and papers as companions and comforters. If I am altered it is perhaps because I have turned 'all life into thought.' Can you understand that? This is, somehow, not the meeting I so long anticipated. You cannot imagine how often I have pictured this meeting in my mind, imagined all you would say to me, then my saying all I wanted for so long to say to you. And now that you are here it is entirely different. I am trying to make you see how

intensely happy I am. But all the time I am telling you I love you, you are not even looking at me, but gazing in a lifeless way into the fire."

Then Lucius changed his tone and said:

"Valerie! Why are you silent?—Now that you are here at last. You are mine! Before us is only happiness, happiness—ideal happiness! Nothing shall separate us now!

"Valerie! why are you silent?" he asked again, somewhat sternly. "I have a great deal to say to you, but it will take weeks to tell you all my plans. When shall we sail? I have arranged for the yacht to be within reach. Tell me which day we sail together from here, and where?

"You do not know all my thoughts," he continued. "all my meditations, while I bore out my year. How I thought, and thought over life, and all it meant, as I never thought before. Well! only because you had come into it, I wanted to understand it a little better than I did. You don't know at first how I began to dread Death after I met you. I, a person to whom Life offered no attractions before, thought and struggled with myself my problem of unhappiness. Now I think I understand it a little better than I did. You don't know how much I have learnt, shut up with my books and through meditation. Perhaps the 'spirits' were wise," he added, laughing curiously. "I have in this way been trying to bring my whole nature under control. I know the difference between real love now—such as in my better moments I feel for you—and the false feeling which we men and women of the giddy, base world call love, which is lauded as being 'love.' Yes! to understand Love, people must understand Life as you and I do now, or, rather, as we are beginning to. What is mostly understood for love in the world is a passion which in some way aids or adds to the personal comfort and happiness and pleasure of the

other—as a man loves his wife and children, often because their personal presence and companionship bring pleasure and happiness to him. But as for real self-sacrifice, that does not occur in his love, or in their love for him. To Love is to sacrifice self. I am going to sacrifice my whole self, my whole life to you.”

“Ah! You have never spoken more truly! Lucius,” replied Valerie, at last very gently—“that to love is to sacrifice *self*.”

She hesitated again, as if wondering if the right words would come to her, not knowing exactly what she wanted to say.

“Love is the widening out of the rays of Life. Lucius, while you have been dreaming your dreams and meditating I have been among the quicksands of Life, and learnt some lessons too; but they are lessons learnt in the outer, external World of to-day. I have finished for ever with ‘idylls,’ love-songs, sweet, romantic little love-stories, passion and sentimentality, flirtations, yachts and selfish love-affairs, society, house-parties, pleasures, nonsense, and all the other intensely selfish vanities and dangerous follies of life.”

“You have been watching Life, Valerie. Well? What have you seen that has made you so despondent and uninterested in your own future. Tell me?”

“Tell you! Oh! what shall I tell you? I know the World now, and I know that is just what we must none of us do—think of our own futures. Oh, I know that is going against the Law. I know the world as it is, with its theft, disguised as commerce, its cheating, as trade, its lies as diplomacy! But among all other things, I have seen the world’s and men’s attitude towards women. I ought, for the sake of all the poor unhappy women in the world, the human misery I have seen, too great indeed for us yet to grapple with—instead, to loathe and

hate all men, because they are responsible for it. I have watched the rat activities of the ordinary, respectable, honest (?), money-making men, striving dishonestly under the cloak of honesty, for Wealth, nearly all dehumanised, trampling women and children under their feet on their way—except their own, and often those too. Before, I passed my life seeing only the surface, the attitude of the World towards Society women, or rather that apparent external attitude towards women who were fortunate and protected, some in that mad, stupid whirl of Society, and some who had great riches and were set upon the higher rung of the social ladder. But that was only a false, external attitude too. In my ignorance then I imagined a woman's life was an enviable one, delightful merely because she was a woman, and if young, that all she need care about was her own harmless frivolity, femininity, happiness, pleasure-seeking, idylls, pretty love-songs, romances, flirtations, nonsense and general petting. I have finished with all that. I do not judge either now by anything external, but only from the inner standpoint. I know now that conventional politeness to women is often but 'the chalice in which time-servers are accustomed to offer us the poison of hypocrisy.' That which I had seen, that side of life—everything having come to me without having to mingle with the tigers of the World who fight for money, so I was not capable of seeing quickly—was only a small and unreal illusive picture of Life, the brightness in it false and alluring lights, to be seen only in their true value through the great contrast, the terrible blackness all around. My frivolity and restlessness, now I know what it was. I had been longing for something real. I did not know the real from the false, but I took the advice of my spirit friends, and first went out and saw with my own eyes the real, and some of the blackness. You see, I

thought to love would bring me the happiness I longed for; but I knew nothing of true love, which loves no one person for pleasure to oneself, but, instead, extends to all, all humanity. They must have been good 'spirits' after all. Now I have grown indeed weary with the masks of the World and their illusory joys, which hide the real, that slip and melt and decay in one's hands in the clasp, as a phantom eludes mortal touch. O Lucius! dear Lucius! Strive to let go all earthly loves, and become indifferent to the masquerade and love of life; and gradually the pains will pass away, as tales that are told only to be forgotten, when following the dawning Light of True Love, pure emotions, and the culture of the attuned Will. You must go, Lucius, to America to your wife, and try and love and cherish her, and lead a good, honest, family life. It is Love that should hold the home together and perpetuate the human race. They were perfectly right to advise me to go out into the world at large, for a time to gain strength. When one sees for oneself and becomes disgusted with present conditions, one begins to rise then to the moral atmosphere of reform, which in all its various phases, is ever active to exalt, purify, and ennoble Humanity. Yes! The only true principle of existence and understanding is freedom—liberty. Having seen, one has to press onward under the guidance always of the unseen hands. Few yet believe in trusting in one's own place allotted to one, waiting for one's opportunity to put things right, and to help in putting things right by throwing, as well, harmonious emanations of sympathy and love about one, to assist in the mental atmosphere.

"It is no use going to war with evil: we have to use it," she continued. "Evil is necessary; it is to use, to learn of it. Control it, direct it; then we turn into a friend in disguise what the world calls evil. Evil is at the foundation of everything in this world,

and we shall have to build on it, not ignore it or treat it as an enemy. It is simply undeveloped good, and while it may crush those centred in the World, on selfish habits, cruel appetites, passions, false love and vain ambitions, there are those to whom it comes as a Strengthening Angel of Light, sent from the inner sanctuary of Divine Love. The great error of Life is the love of only one of man's entities, the outer sense body: people cannot see the inner man, the soul behind. I wonder if I shall ever forget the insults and contempt I have seen, in one year, heaped upon the less fortunate of my sex. We know nothing without Experience. I have studied also some of the laws of this civilised country, which gives to man, instead of to the rightful owner, the woman, the child she has borne. If ever I forget all this, and cease to despise most men, then I may return and live my life upon your plan, perhaps live here with you, instead of living as I now purpose doing, after my own plan. I have solved the question I set about solving, and these are the words wherein the solution lies, 'Sacrifice always personal to general happiness. Get beyond the crust of things to the real meaning of Life.' We have to become mediators between time and eternity to cheer and comfort the broken-hearted."

"Valerie! You cannot mean this? Is this to be the end of my waiting? Are we not each going to set ourselves free?"

There was a suspicion of tears in Valerie's eyes as she spoke, and as she turned her head as if to hide them, she put her hand gently on his arm.

"You see, Lucius Macnamary, I now believe we were entirely wrong in our views. I believe, as the 'spirits' said I should, that I have solved that problem in the right way—in this way.—There is no freedom in this life, not in the way you mean.—Separation? Remember, there is no separation from the whole of Humanity, there are always others *who have rights*

bearing upon freedom. All humanity is one. We are all bound together. There can be no freedom, separation, without disaster—certain certain disaster all around. In considering complete freedom, we are so apt to consider it selfishly, as it bears directly upon ourselves, our personal wishes, our own selfishness. Is it not so? Our own interests, everything gratifying that it can do for that deluded animal 'self.' It would gratify you to set yourself free, and possess one you imagine now you love, whom you think that love gives you a right to, even if she belongs to another man. There you overstep the rights of brotherhood and humanity and become a thief. But, did you not say, Lucius, that you had learnt that love, real Love, was to sacrifice self? Now, think well over those words, dear Lucius. What we desire, everyone, is freedom of action, freedom of opinion, ideas, of thought, belief, and above all, independent freedom of 'being,' not mere separation in the physical. Yet we always forget there are other considerations except our own wishes to be taken into consideration, account, and other points of view, which make it impossible and wrong to act for our own interests and what only is pleasure to oneself. As all Humanity is One—believe me, there can be no sense of separation from anyone. We must be all one with Nature and Humanity, like the waves of the sea and the sands on the shore. Nothing in Nature can stand alone, without disaster. Separation, if it is in our minds, our thoughts even, will create disaster, disharmony, and discord."

"Then what, Valerie—is—freedom?" demanded the man, with a curious expression in his eyes. "Real freedom, that everyone longs for, particularly those unsuitably married, and yet that which is also in justice to others as well as profit to ourselves. To be free, that is, independent of the bondage caused by exploded conventions and the control of

others and their minds, which invariably affect each other, sometimes having a most retarding, injurious effect! That is what I am considering, and what I wish for. The word has so long been considered as meaning entire separation, living to oneself. How can we attain this freedom, yet take our stand, perform our part in the world as members of one human family. Can we not be free thus and then use our freedom for the good of all those previously associated with us ourselves and mankind as a whole?"

"Yes, my dear friend and brother, we can be free," said Valerie Trelawney. "Free, when we realise that freedom is 'Our spirit's consciousness of truth,' and not any sense of separation. Only, Lucius, when we realise our own natural union with the whole of Humanity, that separately we are useless, unimportant. When we realise it is impossible to stand alone, and live for oneself, and think what would be a pleasure to oneself without horrible maladjustment of Nature's laws. It sounds inconsistent," said Valerie, smiling, "but we are here only to work, to work in our place in the scheme of things, not to spend this little earth-life in any way for ourselves. We have to kill out the personal self and work. We are merely agents to help on the evolution of Humanity," she replied.

There was a troubled look in the man's eyes.

"You are changed! I do not know which I prefer," said he, smiling. "This or the old Valerie, full of frivolity."

"I am a most uninteresting creature, a creature made by my own experiences!" she laughed.

"But," he argued, "constant opposition and interference with actions, opinions, thoughts of the other, arouses the hottest contention and natural desire in the mind of everyone for freedom. Imagine the absurdity of two people who think separately being

united. It is preposterous! Yet that is the exact position of many modern marriages."

"Yes! But to escape from the interfering, opposing influence of another, is but the outward definition of freedom," said Valerie, looking straight into his eyes. "True freedom, Lucius, is something within oneself, and not a consequence of an escape from an influence which surrounds one."

"I am entirely unconvinced by argument," returned Lucius, leaning towards her and taking her hands.

"It is within the power of all to be free," returned Valerie. "To be free—spiritually. True freedom is not a power to gratify oneself, one's own whims and pleasure, for as one gratifies 'self,' so most assuredly must one oppress, injure, control, and dominate others."

"I am listening, Valerie. Your obstinate persistence in all those ridiculous ideas you have got into your head is all nonsense. But I know it is but a passing phase. However, go on. If you must torture me, let me hear all your thoughts."

"Well, if we hold a correct view of freedom, Lucius, it will be operated in the minds of all those with whom we live and associate, and from their minds will return to us again, bringing comfort, the fruit of right thinking and living. This is the Universal Law expressing inviolable Principle."

Lucius Macnamary was silent. Then he said a few moments afterwards, "Continue! Valerie."

"The mind's right thinking will create an actual chemical change in the minds of those around us. I own it takes a little time. Develop the Truth about anything in our own comprehension, and we immediately reflect it and produce order and happiness in the hearts of others. Such is our intercourse between the minds of those who share this outward consciousness, that whatever we do, even our thoughts, whatever mental-picture we form in our minds, reflect

themselves to others, their results for influencing others are inevitable. Is it not so?"

The man was again silent.

"Thus, if we would influence others below us in mental understanding, we must coincide with this Natural Law, and all our mental images which come with our thoughts must be only good, the most truthful images resulting from the highest thought. Then we will gradually bring out Harmony where there was disharmony and discord."

"What absurd things have you been studying now, Valerie?"

"Remember, we cannot stand alone from the whole of Humanity without disaster," she went on, looking over his head. "Yet, being united to the whole, we can be free by thinking rightly. In this just appreciation of a right purpose is the sole way to be truly free. I have worked it all out now, Lucius, and shown you now exactly how you and I can be free. This, believe me is the *true solving of the marriage problem*, after many, many difficult, er—and dangerous—but conclusive experiments. Indeed, as dear Sir Edward Ambrose would say—most hazardous experiments," she added laughingly.

"Valerie, this is not the end." Lucius rose from his chair, a great towering figure, and clutched her arm. "What of all my plans? My yacht is all ready."

"Do not say the end! Lucius. Remember, that one day if Fate points to me to go to you, I will leave all, hasten to your side, and remain with you, providing, always, that you will still want me. Fate shows me now that we are not free in the sense you mean. That would only create further errors and pain to ourselves, and more particularly others. Now, good-bye! I am going. Think of me, and I will of you. But, still good-bye until the day my soul tells me to seek and go back to you. Oh, what a struggle we

must all undergo before the mind understands the way of the soul."

"But you won't go!"

"I am going."

Valerie Trelawney rose from her seat and stood facing him. "I am going, Lucius. I want to think of our love as a sort of foreshadowing of that Divine Love which our Creator has for each of us. I want nothing to spoil this. Until the time Fate points to me to return, let us set ourselves, instead, to help the evolutionary Law. Go to those very ones who seem most to retard your freedom. Try and live your life well every day. Sacrifice yourself personally, for to 'love' is to sacrifice 'self,' you said. Give up the silly, selfish and idiotic pleasure of being with one person for self-gratification, passion, and pleasure, and devote your days to the happiness of the poor, anxious ones of the world. Lose your personality, that great strong personality of yours, which you have built up, and value so highly, kill it out; you will get more good, and your soul will become greater, by thrusting yourself and thoughts of your pleasures out of your life. Leave the rest to Fate, for Fate is God's Will and Law. You see 'life' is very short here, merely a little day given us to do some necessary work in; we shall have all eternity together. Is it not better to forget ourselves for others here. 'Love is the widening out of the rays of Life.' It is the Life that comes and unites us all again to our Creator. Thus perfect Love is not that 'self-love,' that passion between one man and one woman, but for all. All brotherly love to man as well as woman, and the love of all women at last, towards each other. When we are a little more progressed our love will be utterly regardless of sex. This is ideal, perfect love. But before that we shall have to suffer much at the hands we seek to love. Our duty while here is to our fellow-creatures, for we are all only parts of God, His

Universe, parts of His Being, and thus separate existence is impossible. If I went to you now, as many women have gone before me, think of all the others who would follow our example, of all the disaster that would follow. Not as we would hope to live our lives perhaps, purely and honestly, thinking we were doing right by living together, but simply through recklessness, impulse, desire of change, passion, and other perhaps mercenary reasons. Young children, too, would lose their parents, and terrible injury would follow. What a muddle the world would be in. No, no. It is not by rushing from the consequences of our mistakes that we set an example to the world, but by teaching others of less mental understanding in the future not to make mistakes. Showing that Marriage is so sacred that it should be made impossible for it to be lightly entered into, in all churches, without severe inquiry, or except at the exact appointed time when those two people meet who are destined to meet by the laws of Nature, and real Affinity, for the Laws of Hereditary affinity, temperaments, should be more largely studied. When life is better, purer, more spiritual, that recognition of chemical affinity will be easier. Do not let us spoil eternity for a few short years here. Listen, my brother, and let the 'Spirit of Love' tell you what pure human Love should be!" Valerie Trelawney was looking into his eyes and speaking as one inspired.

Lucius Macnamary took the hand of the woman he loved in his, and they stood there, in silence.

"The way to final freedom is within yourself, or rather ourselves, yet that way begins and ends outside of 'self.' Ah! we must all make mistakes in order to become wise, suffer and grow more strong by making the best of them," said Valerie. "The more the inner voice is listened for, dear Lucius, the more loudly will it speak. Remember, those duties which we have bound on our shoulders have become

Causes, or our Karmic obligations, which, if we neglect, sets the whole world awry. We have learnt by that absolute certainty which comes not by theory but Experience, and it is better so. For thus we acquire some definite and plain knowledge of the Cosmic order."

The twilight came again and the shadows, the red light deepened and the sunset faded across the horizon, until the sea looked blue-black. Before it was night the twain had separated, and each gone his and her own way. His last words to Valerie that night before they parted were these:—"Do not forget when you want me to tread life's path with you, beloved, that I will be here waiting among my books and papers. Until then, I am with you always in spirit. For I, too, have learnt many other truths to help me in this disappointment. One, that space is a mere illusion. Another, that spirit has no limitations. So I shall always be with you, wherever you are, while I am apparently working in my physical body in the physical plane in another place. But if you should want me in the physical, for any emergency, any trouble, send me a message or a wave of thought, and I shall come here, or wherever you wish, wherever else I am, to meet you, and be ready to remain at your side should you want me. Wherever our bodies are, within our hearts is the link of unity and communion, a direct and immediate intuition of oneness."

"I will," said Valerie, "meanwhile—adieu."

When man grows and evolves in the spiritual world to think is to realise. No doubt, hesitation or delay is there about this action of the higher sense. If he thinks of a place he is there, of a friend, that friend is before him. No longer can misunderstanding arise, no longer can he be misled by false appearances. Every thought and feeling of his friend's lie open as a

book before him on the mental plane, and if this is true of man, as true it is, of What must the Logos be—the True Nature of the Great Source of Life.

For even this falls miserably short of that which lies beyond all words—the immense, the wonderful, spiritual vitality of His celestial World! The Unseen World, in the midst of which we live and move unheeding. Oh! believe—no, learn, rather, to Know, that all the glory of the highest Heaven is about us, here and Now, if we will open our eyes and See the *Light* all about us, when our experience begins to transcend the mere physical plane.

On her return to her hotel, Valerie Trelawney said to herself: "After careful study, I have quite made up my mind that Romance is for girlhood only—for the English girl of fresh beauty and plain code of morals," she laughed; "and her subtle rival—the married woman of problems—will do well to put it out of her life and become sternly practical. My advice to women is—never go beyond the line of friendship, on the physical plane, when there are barriers which are unsurmountable, and cannot be broken without disaster. Our duty is to bear them until they become barriers no longer, or are loosened for us, by God's Will, and a problematic novel is needed to impress this upon them, instead of encouraging stupid, romantic, silly notions, and sickening Sentiment! A woman is ruined socially if she gives up her life to any man except her own husband. Her happiness, her honour, and everything that makes life worth living will be ruined. It is not real love on the part of any man of honour to wish to drag a woman down. When will women see this? It is only vile, selfish, disgusting passion. And when mad infatuation has burnt out, there is nothing left. If only women would believe that there is not a man born yet, not a sufficiently good or noble man existing, to make it worth while

Oh, how ideas change! as one progresses and grows older. There is nothing in this world of greater value to women than good, sound advice, balance, steady thinking, and practical common-sense!"

Experience is the Law of Life and of growth. One year's study and intense meditation for the man, one year's practical experience of life for the woman, had brought them both to the great estuary of an expanded consciousness, from which gradually blossoms forth happiness which no tongue can tell. Their knowledge was daily increasing, growing, accelerating their evolution, and unfolding all the divine possibilities that lie enwrapped in all human consciousness. Only that, in any person, which is good and beautiful can by any possibility be permanent, the evil must be by its own nature only temporary. When the silent soul awakes, it makes the man or woman more purposeful, vital, real, and responsible, aware of the demands of duty upon them, and teaches that they must obtain nothing by their own right, but because they are parts of the whole. Little parts of God. They had now so far awakened in Knowledge that the long line of their past lives was beginning slowly now and then to unfold itself before them; they could each see dimly the Karmic causes in this and in past lives, which made them what they were and brought them to this point in their Destiny. They could see, although still only through a glass darkly the Karma, that lay in front to be used up, and were both beginning to realise what their exact place in Evolution really was. So their knowledge made them try to kill out those real enemies of mankind—themselves, their physical, animal selves, that dwell in sensation only. From their eyes the illusive veil of personality was being lifted by the kind, invisible hands always around each of us—if we will believe this—and we at last grow to know

this each for ourselves. The struggle between the lower and the higher was over for ever.

"Stronger than steel is the sword of the Spirit
Swifter than arrows, the light of the Truth is ;
Greater than anger, is love that subdueth."

We each of us have these unseen hands, invisible helpers from the spiritual worlds, around us, helping on God's Law, and concerned with our special Evolution, which is part of the work allotted to them. Without the mysteries of Love and the Passions, which they use as tools to mould our characters, and these mysteries of Life and Death, where would mankind be? It would be a life of apathy. A religion without its mysteries is a temple without a God, and in the desired ripening and perfecting of the soul within lies the secret of man's aspiration. In the present imperfect state of man the soul forces are scattered throughout every atom of the natural animal body, in no way focalised, and this can only be done by the emotion of true and higher love. Therefore it can be truly said that "Love is the secret of Life" but only love in its higher sense. Unless it be cultivated, developed and focalised, the soul cannot be drawn from the natural body except by Death, while the perfect soul can leave the physical body at will, and fly to more vital realms than this. The natural animal soul of desire, the body of passion, is entirely associated with physical, objective life and its existence only.

"Nothing in Heaven is in bonds; nothing upon earth is free." We must all sooner or later arrive at the certainty that nothing on earth has any value compared to the higher life. We must do the right merely because it is right, without considering our own gain or loss, with perfect indifference to the enjoyment of the fruit of our own actions, and this is a path of self-development which eventually

we all must follow; but is it not better to travel it immediately, of our own free will, than to wait until pain, misery, suffering, and the slow but resistless force of Evolution, drives us along in spite of ourselves? Work with Nature's laws. "Seek and ye shall find." Heaven and "Soul-World" being so very close, while modern Society knows only the objective world and the five animal senses by which it judges every question, thus the general range of conventional thought must be low and sensual, and it is not known that the law of Conjugality in the higher mannerism of Esoteric man is the particularised, specific and main force in Nature. People who understand these underlying principles of Nature's Laws give themselves to the kingdom of wisdom, light, truth. Then truth sets itself in them, gives itself, opens itself, amplifies itself, bringing them into the condition of the arch-"natural law" and spirit. Unfortunately, humanity is still so cankered with conventional naturalism, and throws aside this important truth, and sees nothing more in modern marriages, or the union of sexes, than mere temporary alliances for the reproduction of species. Love and marriage is in the subjective world as well as the objective. Its seriousness and beauty is incomprehensible to the sensual mind; through it are the fundamental principles on all planes underlying both man and nature which should bear upon their faces the Divine Image of God. If this were realised there could be—no Divorces.

CHAPTER XVII

"DIENE DEM EWIGEN"—SERVE THE ETERNAL

"There is no death ; what seems so is transition.
This life of mortal breath
Is but the suburb of the life Elysian,
Whose portal we call Death."

"WRECK of a mail steamer! Wreck of a mail steamer! Great loss of life. Fearful catastrophe."

Lucius Macnamary, our studious bookworm, was sitting in his club one afternoon about five o'clock, two years later. His great eyes seemed, to most who observed him, to look out upon human comedy now with the easy, urbane, half-humorous and wholly tolerant appreciation of a true cosmopolitan. He was startled by this cry of the newsboys in the street. He rose, and taking from the table the latest edition of a newspaper, returned to his chair, and read the following announcement:—

"Late yesterday evening a terrible wreck occurred of an almost new vessel belonging to a great Pacific Steamship Company of New York, on its way from Hong Kong and Honolulu, which recently had broken the record for quick passage."

Here Lucius remembered with horror that his wife and his step-children had gone to Hong Kong about the sale of some valuable property, intending to touch Honolulu on their return, and he had come to London to rejoin them at the town house. So it was with a slight shudder, the vitality of his ever-baffling intuition arousing and warning him of the

news of the disaster, and something in connection with it concerning himself, that he continued reading as if entranced and rooted to the ground.

"The steamer's construction embodied several innovations not found in any other, and this terrible news has filled everyone with amazement.

"The majestic *Oceanana* was nothing more or less than a seemingly perfect ocean city, traversing the sea at the speed of twenty-nine miles an hour. Thousands of tons of materials had been built into her hull alone, possessing about 70,000 tons of steel, and the quantity of coal carried in her bunkers, which she had obtained from South Wales, would supply a village for some time. In her maiden trip she had broken the record, steaming across 2500 nautical miles in a marvellously short period of time, and since then she had performed many journeys. She had taken on board her full complement of passengers and cargo, and was an almost incredible number of tons in weight, her heavy engines being about 22,000 horse power. All the steamers of this American Company are built in the same manner, with two distinct sets of boilers, two shafts and screws, and a solid longitudinal bulkhead dividing them propelling this ship; the crankshafts were almost the most important ever built, and the propellers were twenty feet in diameter. In many ways it was exceptionally luxurious, with sleeping accommodation for thousands of people, in addition to her large crew.

"Every caution had been taken to render her unsinkable. As a safeguard against grounding, there were numerous pumps and other contrivances; on her decks, of course, were many lifeboats of collapsible type of wood and steel. It was an hour after daylight. The vessel was well outside when gradually the weather began to change. In another hour or two a dull, leaden sky lowered heavily down upon a

terrible, terrific sea, thrashed into foam by a wild easterly gale, and the rumble of thunder began to be heard. Not a man on board was in any way alarmed, having such absolute confidence in the noble ship and her brave captain, that they amused themselves in their various ways—playing bridge, smoking, and dancing. In an hour or so, every timber quivered underneath, as she sped out at her heightening speed in the northern darkness, and plunged daringly against the spuming waves and wind which whipped her, defying the thunderstorm and night. Her course lay due north, but the lights of the shore could be at last seen as the gulf broadened at the heart of the widening sea. At one time a great ironclad loomed past her, then went on and left her behind, lost immediately again in the darkness. Suddenly in the midst of the storm, without any warning, the voice of the captain shouted these words of command,—

“All take to the boats!”

“What a moment to live through! What a scene followed! Anticipation of some advancing peril flew from mind to mind. The women and children were quickly placed in the boats, his orders being obeyed amid shrieking and confusion of the women. The men and the brave captain followed, but, awful to relate, only one soul ever reached the shore, and he could not tell what had occurred after they had all unquestioningly followed the ship’s master’s orders, in whom everyone had the most implicit confidence, as he had all his life been in the service of the Company. He had been perfectly right in his order and conclusion, for the vessel sank in half an hour from the time of leaving it. Another great ironclad passing at the time saw her disappear.”

Then followed the long list of the passengers and crew, and among them Lucius Macnamary, horror-

stricken, saw the names of his wife and step-children.

He dropped the paper from his hand, leaning back in his chair with an expression now of real sorrow on his face.

It was a great shock. This mystic, austere anchorite was indeed lured back to the world and his rational senses by the shock.

"Now I know there is no severance of the marriage tie but Death, and this terrible heart-rending catastrophe is the law to show me where the error lies, and to come in this way is my punishment."

For the first time in his life he saw his own character as it had been, all his love of personality and selfishness, although his passions were now becoming slowly annihilated by an unflinching will. He had returned to try and do his duty in the world and live his life upon another plan, to be met with news of this hideous, terrible accident. He sat down in his chair and cried like a child.

The Law of development is wrought into the very fibre of Humanity. The two years that had just passed had made a great change in this man, for he had now passed the moat that is around the gate of human emotions, and his mind, in spite of his unconscious complacency since he last saw Valerie Trelawney, had been quickening, qualifying for a most progressive evolution. Her views of life and words had filled his soul, he became possessed with one idea; his duty to others bound to him and to all humanity. Now he closed his eyes and tried to let the World fade away from his consciousness. To reach them and speak to them, comfort and help them on the astral plane. Fate, hitherto orderly, or disorderly facts, he turned over in his wonderful, evolving, powerful mind. He was at last beginning to form a rational idea of their wonderful causation.

There had been many stages in his upward path, for men in their growth and evolution take varying lines, and his unceasing meditation accustomed him now to contemplate intellectually all the ideals of life he had formed, which appealed to and raised him by their grandeur and nobility. He was being stirred fundamentally by the promptings of that Divine life which is within all men. In times of meditation on the ideal the very face of the natural man shines with a supernal glory, and when the gaze is turned inward, the spiritual divine nature is imparted to the heart and mind. After an hour's thought, his spirit having gone to those dark waters and lived through the catastrophe in vivid imagination, his countenance had a happier expression. He knew that all these things were effects of causes created in other lives. He knew that God is a God of Justice, however appearances to the ignorant may seem contrary. It was now that the great Law of sympathetic vibration asserted itself, and, as is always the case, was answered by a vibration synchronous with itself, for when the human soul evolves it enlarges its limit for all, raising itself to the plane of love, bliss and perfect unity, from spirit—ethereal rarity down to grossest density. He was united with them on the mental plane. In earth-life we see our friends so partially, we know only those parts of them which are congenial or uncongenial to us. The other sides of their character are practically non-existent. Thus ordinary communion and knowledge are exceedingly defective.

As well as in that of Lucius Macnamary, in the lives of all who had met at Lady Ambrose's house the good Law was working with undeviating accuracy. Lately, when he had been with his wife, whose ideas and thoughts seemed all in such direct antagonism and conflict with his own, he had learnt and practised to at once "cease to think as a separ-

ated self." That was his habit of creating harmony. That is the great secret of happiness and harmony. He had discovered it by steady thinking. He had realised that we are each part of the All, and our existence maintained by draughts of the All. Everything that made his life unharmonious, through his own thinking, mistakes and inexperience of true life and duty, had been carefully weighed in the balance of judgment, and he, as Valerie had done before, was beginning to pass out of "the life of sensation" into "the Life of Knowledge," realising that the troubles, crosses and disappointments of Life are only our limitations, and often necessary for the purification of our characters, and Nature's plan to raise us higher, that the very essence of sin is separateness. The thought-reasoning of the World which had filled their minds erstwhile, instead of perfect Purity of life and purpose, is that which often stultifies all progress and development, and, just like old laws, needs change and renovation. He had been thinking strenuously and continuously since Valerie and he had separated, and the inner man had discovered the Law, had sought and found the Truth, always provable Truth, under most diverse forms and appearances, that good evolutionary Law which was striving hard to kill out in each of them that illusion—the personal self!

At the heart of all is God, life, love, happiness, and everyone and everything that seem outwardly repugnant to us, the evolved among us know must be brought within the circle of our love. His extraordinary powers of telepathy and telæsthesia had grown and enlarged themselves. Life, indeed, appeared to him differently than it had some years previously, when human existence had been a riddle and full of unsolved problems. He had been full of worldly, sublime egotism, self-wrapt, like a cocoon, in his passionate, worldly thoughts. Before this

fate which had now intervened, he had made up his mind concerning the mystification that surrounded him; impatience at his own destiny, and in the presence of others not in harmony with his own mind, had given place to patience, calmness and the realisation of his kinship with the most minute atom, raising him almost to the high stature of a god. He had decided now that Fate must in every case be bravely met, and patiently, and conduct rightly ordered. It is only by well considering the results of our actions that Knowledge of the Law can be obtained, and whether they are right or wrong.

Happiness follows some actions because they are in harmony with the law that runs through life. Misery follows all those in contravention.

Valerie's words rang in his ears sometimes when in deep meditation: "Why should men go wrong so much before they go right?"

"Why, indeed?" he asked himself. But now he knew why. Ultimate happiness and ultimate right are inseparable, since we live in this world of Law, and the highest Good is the highest bliss. So in this right thinking his Fate had lost its previous pain and this last year had been happy in the work of duty only. For all problems he had met in life he now knew belonged only to his own stage of growth and was something in himself, in his own mind and character. He thought again of the awful shipwreck, and the loss of so many lives. Many great acts of self-denial, patience, forbearance he had noticed in his wife towards her former husband's exacting children came to his mind that had escaped him before. When he tried to picture the scene his eyes grew moist with tears, his sight dim. "Poor Madeline," he said, "they are now all together with their father and perhaps her best husband." Yet, although he tried hard to put the thought of anyone else out of his mind, at this moment, in the midst of his sadness,

when the idea of Valerie came to him it brought a strange comfort and happiness quite new, over which he seemed to have absolutely no control. Rich, cultured, scholarly, he had yet to bear the pain of a seemingly, unsuitable marriage; and that bitter year, when the sting of passion and impulse and unreason—the mind's projection towards outer attraction—which had almost maddened him, was only, he knew now, one little lesson to teach him—as all men must eventually be taught, by pain if they will not learn in any other way—the simple alphabet of morality. This curious marriage, its ties, duties, had been necessary to teach him, necessary for the Evolution of his Character. His views before had been taken and coloured from worldly men around him, knowing no higher motive than their own enjoyment. He now thought of his last meeting with Valerie Trelawney, and some words came to him.

"The soul's armour is never well set to the heart unless a woman's hand has braced it, and it is only when she has braced it loosely the honour of mankind fails." (—RUSKIN.)

Following closely upon the news of the disaster, in the most ludicrous fashion, as if Fate were in a laughing mood, came letters for him by the next post.

The first he opened was from Mr Newport, saying that he had married a *prima donna* in a comic sing-song show. The next letter was from Lady Ambrose, asking if he had heard, after Valerie and her husband had taken a delightful trip to India, that Mr Trelawney had eloped with Moonlight, and before it was decided whether his wife would divorce him, he had died of an aggravated liver trouble, and that Mrs Trelawney was now in India. He opened another letter. It was from the good and beautiful Countess. It began :

"DEAR LUCIUS,—Your problem, which was the first one I have ever asked of my dear spirits which they left unsolved and preferred it to be solved by Experience of Life, has been much occupying my mind. There is no doubt that Marriage and Divorce will in a few years be again the absorbing topic of England. How critical and important is the question, can be realised, when one remembers it was from that arose our extolled Protestantism, and that the actual struggle between Henry VIII. and the Church sprang from it. So much for boasted Protestantism. Well, Marriage is usually a source of endless misunderstanding and friction, and as it is now—one must go under, in most cases, or live in absolute independence—"

Here Lucius put the letter away to read some other time. It seemed to him it had arrived at a curiously inappropriate moment.

The other members of the house-party all seemed to be going on in the same giddy round of fashion's silly circle. Around and around, but only apparently, for they were never at the same point but all advancing.

"In this mad world," said Lucius Macnamary to himself in another mood, "I am now convinced that almost the most important time is *Now*. There is no Future, no Past, because it is only at that time we have power over ourselves. The most necessary man or woman is the person nearest us, the person with whom at each present moment we are in touch, and the most important work is to do good to him or to her, then we need worry our minds no longer over any problems, for we shall then find all life's problems will solve themselves in God's way, and according to His Will."

The sad part of it was, that like many others in this World, our hero and heroine had not realised their duty always to those with whom they were

in immediate touch soon enough, or understood the nature of their mistakes and experiments, until it was too late to make amends, and those others were dead ; so let this be a warning. This is so often the case ; then come regrets over the past—regrets when it is too late to rectify mistakes are piteous and useless. When it is distinctly understood that Life is meant for sacrifice and not for self-seeking, then, and then only, will true Harmony come out in all relations of existence.

All the teachings of the Christ pivot on the point of unselfish Love. Thousands of things of thought and fancy and of feeling all strike at the hour this one sovereign note of unselfish Love, without creed, sect, or regard to any of the educational apparatus of any church or times. The only unity God wishes, the only unity the World will ever see, is that of Spirit and Love.

The use of Pain is the gradual teaching of the true Nature of Law to show us all the transitory nature of the desires of the senses. Pain thus leads to Knowledge. The Spiritual Light is like a string of pearls. The last on the cord is Morality. Loose the string and it is the first to fall into the dust.

CHAPTER XVIII

THANKS BE TO DESTINY

"O was im Traum die inner Stimme spricht ! Das wird uns Wahrheit wenn die Sonne leuchtet."—SCHILLERBUCH.

"And the seer said : 'The appointed place where thy work shall be wrought, has lived from the beginning in the mind of God. Come forth, and we shall search for the spot which hath been prepared for thee.'"

THE gathering mists of Time had begun to cast their filmy haze over all who once had met at the house of Sir Edward and Lady Ambrose. Almost ten years now had passed since the events recorded, bringing most startling changes.

Two people were together in an old yellow chateau in the north of France, within sight of the Rance as it trends eastward. "La Côte d'Émeraude" is the name given to that part of the coast of Brittany. To the God-lighted mind of man, no more ideal spot and bit of country could be found on all the earth. Here hearts beat close on the Heart of the Universe. It was near a vast forest, celebrated in the romance of the Round Table, and the haunt once of "Merlin," "Vivien," "Broceliande," and such mystic names. Not far also from the fountain of "Baranton," "the valley of no returning," of which there is a verse in the *Barsas-Breis*, old Breton poetry, prized so much in Brittany. Indeed, all around is that lonely magic environment, which continues to live in the category of all things that keep a virile eternal beauty ; the best place for meditation to solve Nature's curious riddles. The Breton rocks are mild counterparts to the Celtic, thus

the plough. This is all, but it is a bit of Nature in her primitive perfection, from where it seems the World is at rest.

"Not in the clamour of the crowded street,
Not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng,
But in ourselves are triumph and defeat."

Rest in peace is not to be gained by force. Rest and peace are pure gifts from the Heaven within us. Rain-clouds and sunshine meet in our tears and smiles. Nature repeats herself in "law," man in "duty," and that duty is love. Nature works in silence from within towards the without. So also must man work, and his true life is never lonely. His comrades are numberless. He is like Cicero, over whose doorway were these words: "When I am alone, I am least alone," draining his force from "the mountains of thought," from where God husbands His Strength.

Seasons may come and go and roses grow red and white. As every flower has its aroma, so all external Nature is the materialised expression of the Invisible soul within. What we call the real World is only the camera in which the soul and the unseen are photographed. All external objects are simply leaves in the books of the Library of the Universal. The hardest rock, the frowning mountain, the crumbling wall and broken tower, all are leaves in Nature's universal records. Sensitive souls carry the keys which unlock these treasures in the house of our World.

"O ! Which is most fair,
The sunrise or the sunset of the heart ?
The hour when we look forth to the unknown,
Or that when the landscape of our lives
Lies stretched behind us, and sweet memories
Rise like a tender haze and magnify
The objects we behold ?"

Personality is a passing weakness of the flesh.
Individuality is the objective action of the body.

The character of a man is what he really is. But character is a plant of slow growth, because it draws from the soil air without and the conscience within. With our natural eyes we look upon the body of flesh, while the angels with their spiritual eyes look not upon the material body, but the body of the soul of love, goodness, "the temple within." The body is but the shadow!

When man sees, with that certainty that he knows for himself, instead of depending upon faith and belief that there is a God and a new heaven and a new earth, he sees it only by the exercise of the understanding which grows through the vibrations of his soul and various subtle vehicles. He then becomes illuminated into a receptive and perceptive state, and has power to see his subjective world exactly as the natural eye sees the objective one. His silent meditations are then his best companions, his waking dreams are foretastes of futurity, and the fruits which generally give him the most happiness ripen on the tree of his highest and best "ideality."

Man, who once tastes from the violet cup of the immortals, disjoins himself from the objective things, and flies to the door that opens into the unknown night; then he pursues the guiding star of Spirit, and the invisible helpers come around him, fanned by the sweet perfumes of Peace, even against all obstacles, until this night of all nights fades at last away into the glories of a coming dawn, by which Light he finds his way into the arms of his ideal, and clasps Eternal Life to his fond heart instead of an empty dream, a tale that was told. Behold, death is then swallowed up in victory. Every true impulse is tempered with love and sounds a note in the swelling harmony of Heaven. Men speak often of the great Book of Nature and the vast Knowledge and wisdom to be gained from it. Nature's great Book is indeed a varied expression of the Divine Mind of

God, and every object in Nature, like a sentence in an excellent book, corresponds with the great Love and Wisdom which formed it. All things die in love and all things are born in love, therefore love is the secret of life. The love energy radiating from out the Great Central Sun, Spirit, God, changes its manifestation according to the atmosphere and forms into which it flows. In the higher firmaments or spheres nearer to the heart of God, it is the unselfish love of the angels. In the next inferior state or sphere, it is the illumination and ripening of souls as a spiritual love, universal. Lower still, it is but the natural love of the sex, as marriage is now held from a human standpoint. Below this rational sphere it is simply a mere passion divested of any sentiment. Farther down the scale, as an energy, it is the sympathy of plants, the attraction of metals and the gravitation of atoms. Therefore love is the life and soul of all things from the greatest to the least.

"In thy light, O Spirit of love, we see the light of Truth, which is the renewing life of man, and like unto the waters of the sea, freshens only when it ascends toward Heaven."

Illustrations from physics and from human life help us to see that when we find two things which are perfect opposites they are simply two conditions of the same thing. The positive and negative are two different aspects of the magnetic force. The masculine and feminine are two different aspects of the human being, after being every form.

Every form is governed by the laws of affinity and attraction. Sex, love and marriage are universal and eternal; to arise above the animal and vibrate the dual harmonious attunement of the higher love is the key. The spirit of Truth in sex, love, marriage, not used in their restricted animal sense, is the doorway to all phenomena of spirit, mind and matter.

And matter is real, although Christian Scientists now apparently deny it.

The scientific way to do away with evil is to affirm good, and in so far as they do this, their philosophy is sound, good and useful, but denials of matter, evils, suffering and sin, is unphilosophical, unscientific and inoperative, because it only resists and does not oppose. Spirit gives us the synthetic, inclusive point of view, Matter gives us the analytical, distributive point of view. Therefore, to say "All is Spirit," is to speak truly, for matter as the form of Spirit is One with it. But if we say "There is no matter," we have wiped out half the Truth. The pairs of opposites are the pillars of the Universe. Universal Law cannot be understood with one set of principles.

As well try and conceive a magnet with one pole, life without form, humanity with one sex, cause without effect, as spirit without matter.

Christian Science tries to explain matter by denying it. They do truly know God as Life. But God is All—He is Spirit, is Matter, is the Whole.

The beginning of evil, sin, error, is wonderfully described in the "Book of Genesis," and the old, old story of Adam and poor Eve, shows the loss of the married harmony between the love and wisdom principles of understanding. The state of harmonious attunement determines the state of conjugal love between man and woman, as it also does with all other loves. Perversion of the good and the true in the individual soul is the cause of a corresponding perversion, degeneration, misinterpretation and injury to both physical and mental well-being. The cold, selfish naturalist scoffs at the idea of a purely spiritual love, which was the Christ principle of Love. The highest secrets of Nature are perfectly accessible to him whose growth of soul and illumination of mental constitution are so perfected as to bring the vibrations

of his being into perfect accord with Nature. This enables him to be a vehicle or instrument for expression of the ideas of spirit, or of the Universal Mind. The soul forces in man are only focalised by the emotion of higher love.

This chateau, in the very heart of primitive Nature, was Lucius Macnamary and Valerie Trelawney's summer nest, far, far away from the World's contagious climate.

It is now early morning. Another sun has risen, like a bright yellow globe in the blue-tinted sky, its warmth imparting a brilliancy mellowing all the foliage in the garden and lighting upon a silvery stream that runs by its side.

Lucius Macnamary is sitting in the morning-room, after a breakfast of toast, a tumbler of hock and grapes—full of exhilaration, radiant from "tub" and tooth-brush.

The distant noise of the working peasants, the clang of the far-off sheep-bells 'midst the gorse all a-bloom, comes to him, and voices speaking their own coarse guttural *patois*, entirely different from his own sibilant, musical French, that of the cultured Parisian. Each hour in the country has its own particular sound. Thrushes, larks and blackbirds sing the songs of the unseen. The French windows are all thrown open, and the sustaining air is blowing into the room with the odour of the morning tide. It moves the flowers in the vases near his huge writing-table. They are his favourite flowers, roses, placed there by a loving hand.

"This is Valerie's way of saying 'good-morning,'" he thought as he stuck one in his coat. He was always celebrated for perfection of dress and the accuracy of the graceful, trivial things of life. His flowers seemed fresher than all other flowers, and lasted longer. Between these two, now, no clumsy words are needed; thought-pictures are expressed

as they are formed, the interchange of ideas as rapid as their flashing into existence in the mind.

He is content. He has now learnt to distinguish between moral and exterior destiny, for the soul grows wiser towards evening after passing many, many milestones on the "Path of Life."

"The man who loves only with the love of youth, to whom passion remains a passion, remains only man," he mused. "This is not love! Our love must first be directed to one superior than ourselves to become a lifting force. Then comes constant stimulus to improve and purify the character. A sweet love-story is merely a veil that covers many mysteries, including the history of the evolution and involution of the soul!"

He went to the window and stood watching a little fair-haired child running after butterflies on the lawn. This is his joy and relaxation, for he is one of earth's happiest men. His whole heart and soul are engrossed in his wife; their child is his unspeakable joy. He now went out and sat on one of the garden seats. Then a woman came. It was Valerie.

As she drew near she threw a ball, and the child was tempted to leave Lucius's knee and follow it. Then husband and wife sat and talked for some time.

"Ah! God breathing into all things the breath of life, and not only life, but the breath thereof," he mused. "One must have given up the thought of self, as apart from others, though not of others, as apart from the self. The powers of our minds are the gifts of His goodness, the wonders of our frames the work of His hand. Hear then His voice, obey Him, for He will enlighten thee in all it is proper to know of the Secrets of Nature and give our Souls—Peace."

He looked at Valerie in the same curious amused way as he had done at their first meeting years ago, in the low drawing-room of Lady Ambrose's country

house, while she laughed at him, smiling in just her old way that had so "witched" him. They watched the child with her big blue ball.

They were both full of content with the simple affairs of home, together reviewing life's eventful day.

"It is early, too early. But I have been watching her for an hour, and began to think of her mental development," said Lucius. "There is a scheme of causation to perfect in the mental worlds as the physical."

"Don't," said Valerie, "let her run and chase butterflies for years yet. Let her mind, spirit, and soul develop like the flowers in the garden, as naturally as they do, only without hindrance. That is all we have to guard against—hindrance to Mother Nature in her plans. If you only knew as I know how the spirit and soul of children are crushed out of them. Sometimes they are put with old people, have their life crushed out in that way, sometimes with sad people, who cast their shadows on that delicate complex thing—a child's mind. Sometimes with cruel nurses and servants, left to grow up like little savage animals.

"If you only could know how my heart aches for the sorrows of children. It is rarely that even one child is left to develop naturally, as Nature intended, without hindrance of some sort, constant opposition to her plans, one depressing influence or another, to retard the soul just returned to earth again. How thankful we should be that our child can grow just as Nature intended, watched over, shielded from all knowledge of wrong, any thought of evil, hearing only happy voices, seeing only love and happiness, thinking only happy thoughts, developing bodily, mentally, and morally, body, mind, and soul, shielded by you and me."

"Yes," said Lucius, "it should be always so. Life's spring-time only full of sunshine. Clouds and

shadows, without doubt, kill the life of the flower. If it grows, survives, it grows deformed, ugly, and imperfect. So many of God's most beautiful flowers, through the interference with Nature by imperfect humanity, grow into weeds."

He was in the habit of approaching the nursery as a holy of holies, and watching his little one. He now said, thinking of a saying of yesterday's.

"How wonderful is the mind of a child."

"A child should be regarded by the whole world as something sacred—not discouraged eternally, corrected and irritated, as is so often the case—sacred because they are by the infinitude of their innocence so near to the spiritual world."

"Yes, Valerie! It is as you say, the soul is a quicker keener influence when not hindered by the poor dwarfing senses. Children's senses have not developed, hence the invisible world is nearer, better able to speak to us through them, and it does speak in every one of their actions and sayings. At present it is rarely the invisible shows itself in us. We are too base and gross."

Their child was a sunny little creature, with fair curly pate, dimpled cheek, blue eyes, and a serious inquiring expression on her angel face. To-day she was full of infant coquetry, like a merry fairy reveller. Having grown tired of the ball, she gathered some flowers, brought and pushed them into her mother's hand. They happened to be Valerie's favourite ones too—roses.

"Flowers are God's messages," she said.

"The oldest and wisest philosopher may learn something of the invisible world by spending an hour with children," said Lucius, and in the expression on his face was a glimmer of that pale light of spiritual love, such as God feels for humanity. He put his hand over Valerie's, his child's, and the flowers saying :

"Cara al mio cuor tu sei, ciò ch'è il sole agli occhi miei."

"Ah! we three in sun and shadow. From early morning until the evening sunset comes to colour these rocks, sea and fields. Always together until the hushed even of this unsatisfying, earthly life, Valerie, dear wife. Until at last the light comes—the light of the spiritual and only real life, of which this is merely the symbol, the idea, the shadow. Thanks be to—Destiny!"

The Universally permeating power is everywhere! Celestial presences, and God. All One, Humanity and God. As all colours are component parts of life, so all souls, and all spiritual states, are phases of His presence, divided only by the prism of organic differentiation.

Both had realised, at last, that they had once formed totally wrong ideals, that they were limited by all their past thoughts, wasted opportunities, mistaken choices, foolish yieldings, and enchained by errors of an earlier day.

At this stage they knew their own destiny had been woven by themselves, their past thoughts, into patterns of inconceivable complexity, discovering this by a close analysis of Cause and Effect. Their minds having now taken entire control, their lives which had been once subordinated to pleasures, passions, and impulses, now turned wholly into channels hewn out by most serious reflection. Both vaguely beginning to comprehend the "Why" of things, by removing all that barred from them the Blazing Light of Truth, endeavouring each to be good, instead of seeming so. As they evolved into more subtle, intelligent consciousness, they were moved by ideas and motives, rather than sense, sensation, or the outside world, and by delicacies of sound and colour whether of Nature or Art.

Those who have once entered the stream of definite higher human Evolution, can no longer again fall back from spirituality to become mere worldlings. All of humanity must enter this by the middle of the next round, unless they are to be left behind by the great life-wave, and have to wait for further progress until the next chain of Worlds. Many an hour after his literary work was over saw Lucius painting in his studio, or, later, his face was illuminated and transfigured by the "witchcraft" of music, his wife's voice having become endowed with a new beauty and intensity, the difference between "individuality" and "personality" fully realised.

They saw little else of the outside world, for months together, than the country around them, in their daily walks, which now below, within the vision of their eyes, was like a coat of royal purple and gold, with heather and gorse, and above azure, rose, pearl, amethyst, according to the whim of the changing clouds, and the glimmer of the sun or moon. They had reached a stage when they barely found it necessary to speak in words, but thought in colours and music, gradually but surely coming into touch with life's inner planes. They held no modern superstitions or blind faith in any religion, but, instead, the certainty of conviction founded upon individual experiment and reason, and they had no mistaken beliefs or dependence upon any outward rites and ceremonies to purify their hearts.

It is only when at last the question of sex is ignored, or is not given undue prominence, and men and women meet, and love each other on the ground of "common humanity," when they are far above vain and passionate follies, that women can develop. Valerie Trelawney had put all the World out of her life. Her ideal was to be strong, womanly, shedding on every hand the lustre of Purity, to gain Wisdom's deep

insight, to be gentle, responsive, tender, true, and of Service to Humanity.

There are women and men whose love is the result of impulse and passion, a most exacting, selfish kind of passion, that desires to possess for himself or herself, to hold and tie the object of his or her so-called love, thinking all the time of what they receive, rather than what they can give. They cannot bear to share the loved one's love, or widen out that love to all around. This is the sort of love which degenerates into the horrible vice of jealousy upon the smallest provocation ; such affection as this has no seed in it at all of progress or mental development. There is a love which seeks nothing in return, never thinks of itself, but only of what it can do for the loved one.

Lucius Macnamary had developed to the utmost his literary and artistic ability. He was now a man of very high scientific, philosophic thought, and had become an acknowledged teacher of men. His thoughts went out into the World, written words full of marvellous literary power, burning with enthusiasm for all things moral and social. He was engaged in the unselfish pursuit of spiritual knowledge for unselfish purposes, preaching the gospel of Love, Peace, and the Law.

He had, an hour before, finished writing a review upon a splendid book, an article on "Italian Policy and the Vatican," by Commendator Felice Santini, and had sent it to a monthly review that had begged him for his views on the outstanding difficulties of the Papacy. He had just written also an article for them, headed "Reason is the Light." One day he was sitting meditating, his daily habit, in his curiously-planned, intensely silent, padded study, surrounded by carefully-chosen works of Art, books, manuscripts, and where were also at his disposal all the dictionaries and encyclopædias of a great newspaper office.

"Valerie," he said, laughingly and yet in earnest, as she entered the room, "Man is not 'the missing link,' but the connecting link between dust and deity, and the clock of eternity is wound up by the hand of absolute love. Come and listen to my philosophic reasoning, the result of an hour's meditation! As we think—so we develop; as our 'ideals'—so our lives. More and more must we recognise our duties to the whole. Unity must be the note of the race. I have been searching for the inviolable Laws to which we must all, sooner or later, conform. We were once talking of 'Freedom.' Now, to at last reach equilibrium is another word for liberation and freedom. Ah! I am not going to bore you with my discourse. I have listened to you, listen to me, and don't think I am steadily qualifying for a lunatic asylum. I have been deeply thinking, trying to gain knowledge. Knowledge is power, knowledge of the Law. The more laws of the universe we know, the less limited our lives. Men drift, because they do not know, are helpless, being blind. It is not in action, but in desire, in attachment to the fruit of action—there lies the binding force of action! 'If our thoughts were all free from the moulding of desire, our actions must be good and burned by wisdom.'"

He had now become her friend and teacher, part of her student's mental life, an ideal figure in her musings, his words, the teaching of his famous, world-widely read books, having, for her, many hidden meanings.

"Argument has its root in selfishness and conceit. Now I only listen, Sage!" replied Valerie, smiling at him as she drew near. "Ever in man is there a rooted idea of his own inerrancy, perpetually manifesting itself in all affairs! An interior infallibility which dominates all men, not especially trained out of conceit."

"Well, my discovery is this," said Lucius. "There

is no need of the man of Knowledge to wear out slowly the links of mistakes, of sins forged long ago, for he can cut them swiftly through and be rid of them as effectively as though they slowly rusted away to set him free. And to what end? To serve Humanity. To become strong, self-conscious centres. To teach, to help. Then he realises, as he grows wiser, the utilisation of the Law. He understands the bending of the natural forces. We conquer Nature by obedience. Eh, Valerie? You understand what I mean by that?"

"I always used to say that the man I would love should think like a genius and look like an Apollo," laughed Valerie, teasingly. "Now I have my wish at last. My garden is a field to which the gods have given the power of patience and the magic of those who can wait."

"Nothing enslaves the soul!" continued Lucius Macnamary. "Not even Nature, if, when our souls, by study and Wisdom have gained power, we use our Knowledge in real love for all. Those who have accomplished this mental Evolution should be like cups of the most refreshing water of Life, overflowing with strength and life and love to those who are still on their way climbing. Having once gained this, we can never be drawn again away from devotion and spiritual aspiration, by a worldly life of avarice, ambition, and dissipation. Then at last the 'self' becomes calm, serene, untroubled, lending not of its godlike Essence to forge the chains of Time. Then the soul can go forth out of its Temple, life after life, into the thickest Battle of Life; but at last, to all, the time comes when it is like a strong corner-stone. It is only when we are bound to nothing for ourselves that we gain all power in the universe, by being bound to everything in the name of the 'One Life.' Our experiences, knowledge and studies, are hastening our Evolution to this. But each man must find

his own way through his own experiences, own religion, own heart, or own creed, searching for his spiritual nourishment wherever it is necessary to him, and in whatever religion he feels can lead him also on this path. Viewed in this light, Fate or Necessity ceases to be a terror, and falls with fitness into its place in His Divine Creation."

"True! Lucius," answered Valerie, seriously. "A deep conviction of the Truth of the Law gives to Life an immovable calmness and serenity. Nothing can touch us that we have not merited. Only our own sins hinder us; only our own will fetters us. But whatever is evil, instead of denying it as non-existent, we must oppose it with good, it can only be destroyed by its opposite good. And this at last is our end you see, and a better one than you and I once contemplated. You here in your quiet room, seeking solutions to life's problems, and I—your devoted listener—not slave—that's much too ancient, isn't it?—listener."

"Helper!" whispered Lucius, his voice speaking his love, as his arm went around her.

"Listener!" insisted Valerie. "Well! after all, the greatest necessity of man is to have a companion who believes him—perfection!"

"That is when the authoritative conceited spirit is most rampant," he returned laughing.

Now he took her hand and said as once she had used the same words to him.

"Listen! my beloved! Let the Spirit of Love tell you what true, pure, human love should be! In the far-off dawn of the 'Soul-life,' when it was only a little germ in the ethereal distance of the outer firmament before it became individualised, yet was an entity in the mist of Star-dust, the Soul-Spirits were quickened with the Spirit of God, and met and found each other. Before earth was for us, we were one, even as we shall be one when there

is no time for us any more. Love is from the first, and will be to the end of all time, and beyond all time. This worldly life of ours is comparatively nothing. Love is so eternal, so complete, this mortal life is but a tiny instant, a moment's pause in our journey through the firmaments, or through the heavenly pathways of glory from one star to another. The good Father, Mother, God took our two souls from among the stars, and planted their tiny entities on earth. Clothed for a time in mortal bodies, they should always remain in that Divine Harmony, each in concord of responsive melody, analogous to the tones of musical instruments whose notes breathe atmospheres of consonance and harmony."

He was a changed man. Now of definite purpose and character, of purified life, extinguished passion, of self-controlled mind, intense aspirations towards "æsthetic purity," and the highest nobility of life.

Liberty, usually understood, is not freedom to choose the wrong, or freedom to choose one of two courses, but only "freedom to choose the right." Nothing that came from without could throw him off his balance. The transitory and unreal could cast no definite veil over the vision of his soul, for his thoughts were all in perfect harmony, and one with moral, social, and physical laws. Indeed he had at last arrived, but it was only by the slow and steady method of innumerable failures, by tests and trials on all planes. He had reached Equilibrium, caring for nothing that had before attracted him, no longer drawn by the glare and maddening whirl of the World and Society's sin and shame, in which all seek to gratify the spirit of self instead of the common good. He was an artist now, whose object was not personal fame or riches, but one who considered the mighty power entrusted to him was only for the spiritual elevation of his fellows. He had become indeed wise, and was

rarely to be seen except in his dear, silent chamber, where no other woman but Valerie entered, and when alone, it was the memory of her voice that tuned his pen to music. He had listened to the "song of life," had learnt from it the "lesson of harmony," for Divine Light illuminated his soul, bewildering in its exhilaration, its blasts coming from the unknown that struck his soul with awe.

He had found Knowledge by testing all experience, and now realised unity and the necessity of the subordination of clashing individualities into one harmonious chord of life. He was now regarded by all Newspaperdom, and by Diplomacy as "the prince of journalists," although it was indeed rarely he cared to break the silence of journalistic anonymity. The soul is drawn downwards towards the body by desire, then the animal in us comes out, and fills our lives with passions and earthly appetites. When it is drawn upward towards the spirit by its higher part, then genius, power, beauty and faith are evolved. All his books and writings, now so eagerly sought by people in the World, walking in the dismal paths of unenlightenment and pain, spoke only of the intellectual recognition of Human Brotherhood, of Co-operation, and the sin of separateness; the grandiose, sublime ideal of fellowship, without distinction of race, sex, religion or creed. They all implored for laws by which the poor man and his children might feel at least secure for life, and the rich might be unable to tyrannise; and on behalf of women, who know not why they suffer, their sorrow having root in ignorance, and his works were not like many masculine books written by men, giving only one view, failing utterly to comprehend the nature of women. Man's love having been purified from all selfish elements, that which was passion becomes the love of the husband, the father, or like the love of an elder relative who fulfils his duty, working for the sake of the loved,

that their life may be fairer and better, and then come the last stages when the love that is purified from self goes out to all Humanity. At last the desire—"I"—is crushed out instead of being enthroned above all. He wrote sometimes with tears in his eyes and a strange pain at his heart—the rising sun of eternal thought upon his face, his mind like a becalmed, untroubled sea, the fire of Wisdom and Love burning up his limitations. His great love, which had begun with passion, then love for his wife and child, spreading over the Universe, was becoming like an ocean of compassion, including everything and everybody that feels and lives, thereby teaching the true harmony, and singing the only real "song of mortality." He felt in himself such perfect compassion, courtesy, and gentleness, that never again could it be possible for him to wound any living being, by look, word, thought, or deed. His books found their way to many minds, those less developed types, needing for their happiness abundance of material goods, full of the vulgarity of outer ostentation and riches—the smaller the resources within themselves, the greater their demands upon the outer world—and the books helped many to seek the way their souls had been trying to lead them, to begin that task of at last separating their passions from their Divine possibilities. His words, keenly scrutinised by rivals, taught many that life is meant for Service, and not for self-seeking, and that above all needs is that of immediate Co-operation, in place of competition; Brotherhood, not strife; intellectual and spiritual wealth, not material riches, as a true standard of social consideration. He succeeded often in stifling in many hearts the subtle germs of selfishness, that aped in their growth the likeness of virtues, hiding the disgusting brown serpent of passionate desire under the flowers of love, beneficence and generosity. He had reached "the Rock of Peace and sure insight, on

which he could stand himself, while the waves and storms surged around;" with vision now that saw through the deception of the material object to the spirit it hides, able to listen to the silence and—the still, small voice. None will ever know the joys of Paradise who cannot live like man in Paradise. None will ever restore the golden age to the World who does not first restore himself. He who will but live the "Life of Eden," will find its joys and sacred mysteries in his grasp. He who will do the Will of God shall know the doctrines of Truth and triumph in the knowledge of the Great Mystery. He is free, being born again by the Spirit. The inner man was now content with God's Law; while the absorption of Nature filled him with ecstasy, she had now no longer any veils with which to blind him. His daily object was to write with sufficient force, so that his written words should go forth and make joyful those in the midst of sorrow, and daily to stifle "his own personal self" and rise far, far above the limits of separateness. Valerie and he now lived to join all desiring to Help on Evolution and the serious Service of the World; Lucius's noble life exercising over her great attraction and a desirable control. It was difficult for her to believe that this was once the cynical man of the World, once possessing the same traits of character as the everyday, ordinary, ambitious self-seeker, who strives always to elevate himself by pushing his fellow-creatures down, creatures all resulting from their own experiences in contact with the inharmonious world of men, begotten by their own lives in that world which is so full of intemperance, sexual debauchery, indiscretion, wrong-doing, disorders, and in which is ever raging the great battle of minds.

Life had been their initiator. They had definitely recognised the end and aim of it. Their troubles, crosses, were necessary for the purification of their

natures, to enable them to pass out of the life of sensation, into that beautiful life of Knowledge, still with great imperfections, but never once looking or desiring to look backward into the World they had left.

"This is peace,
To conquer love of self and lust of life,
To tear deep-rooted passion from the heart,
To still the inward strife."

—EDWIN ARNOLD.

"On the road of Life one milestone more,
In the Book of Life, one leaf turned o'er,
Like a red seal is the setting sun
On the good and the evil men have done !

Awake ! from thy sleep, O dreamer !
The hour is near, though late."

"Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring happy bells across the snow,
The age is going—let it go,
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold,
Ring out the thousand years of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man, and free
With larger heart and kindlier hand
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be."

.....
"And so—adieu ! 'Parting,' they say,
'is such sweet sorrow.'"

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